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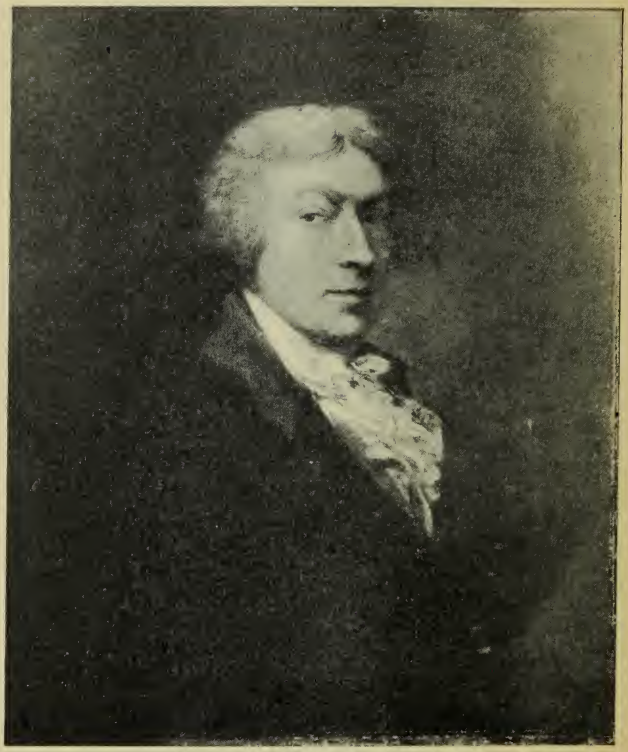

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A. By Himself

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THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

BY

ARTHUR B. CHAMBERLAIN

LONDON: DUCKWORTH & CO.
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The writer wishes to express his thanks to those owners of Gainsborough's pictures who have been good enough to allow him to reproduce them in this book.

A. B. C.

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I

The English school of painting, from the earliest native efforts known to us down to the masterpieces of the eighteenth century, has always achieved its greatest successes in the art of portraiture; and it was not until that century was well advanced that artists began to turn their attention to the rendering of landscape, with the gradual result that this branch of painting became the great distinguishing feature of the art of England.

Such early examples as have been preserved are almost invariably portraits. In the days of the Tudors the painters of them were chiefly foreigners, and whatever native school of artists was in existence was of slight importance, and was completely overwhelmed by German and Flemish influences. For seventeen years Holbein reigned supreme in England, and his methods were adopted by the few Englishmen who rose above mediocrity, such

as Thomas and John Bettes, and Guillim Stretes, who was probably a native; but even Holbein's influence failed to produce a school of English painters strong enough to hold its own against the swarm of foreigners who continued to practise at the English Court, among whom were many able artists such as the Hornebolts, Joannes Corvus, Lucas d'Heere, Sir Antonio Mor, Marc Gheeraerts, Cornelis Ketel, and Federigo Zucchero.

From the days (1526), when Holbein landed here with a letter from Erasmus to Sir Thomas More, down to the time when Van Dyck accepted, about one hundred years later, the invitation of Charles I. to visit his Court, all portraiture bore traces of the Teutonic manner. Before Van Dyck arrived, such men as Paul Van Somer, Cornelius Janssen, and Daniel Mytens had been continuing the traditions of the Germanic school in their portraiture; but the great Fleming, with the consummate artistry of his brush, soon swept all this away, and from his time painting in England made a fresh departure.

Van Dyck's influence upon English painting was undoubtedly great, and he introduced into

GREAT CORNARD WOOD, ABOUT 1753. (NATIONAL GALLERY)

it that grace, and that air of distinction which have been ever since leading features of its portraiture. Whether Van Dyck himself was influenced by the art he found flourishing here, particularly that of the miniaturists, is less certain. That he changed his style while among us is easily seen, and his "fourth or English" manner possesses characteristics not to be found in his earlier work; but whatever fresh impulse he may have received from his new environment, he was able, by his wonderful genius, to carry any such artistic suggestion far beyond the point as yet reached by any of his English contemporaries.

In William Dobson (1610-1646) we have one of the first English portrait painters of real merit, a man who occasionally rose to heights of unusual excellence. He was greatly under the influence of Van Dyck, and succeeded him as court painter. Sir Peter Lely's is the next name of importance. He came to England in the train of William, Prince of Orange, in 1641. Though in all ways an inferior painter to Van Dyck, he was a greater artist than has been usually allowed, and his best canvases are much more than the mere "fashion plates of

simpering beauties" which they have been called. He was a better artist than Sir Godfrey Kneller, who reigned almost supreme in England during the last quarter of the seventeenth and the first of the eighteenth century.

Almost all these men were foreigners, but throughout the seventeenth century the number of English painters went on steadily increasing, and among them were a few capable men such as John Greenhill and John Riley. Jonathan Richardson (1665-1745) is a link between these inferior painters and the giants of the eighteenth century, for he was the pupil of Riley and master of Thomas Hudson, who became the fashionable portrait painter of his day, and was in his turn the master of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It has been the fashion to say that the real school of English painting began with William Hogarth (1697-1764), but a careful study of the work of the men who preceded him proves the assertion to be incorrect. There were certain unmistakable English elements in our portraiture before Hogarth's day, which must have affected his art and that of his contemporaries; while through the work of the miniaturists

from Hilliard down to Richard Cosway (1740-1821) there undoubtedly runs a tradition of painting which is purely English.

The decision as to the relative greatness of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) must be left to individual taste. Each in his own way was an artist of rare genius. By their extraordinary gifts in portraiture they raised the art of England to a far higher position than it had hitherto held, and one which, even in the present day, has not been surpassed. Rivals and contemporaries in their art, they set down upon canvas with unfaltering brush, for the delight of succeeding generations, the life-like presentments of all who were most famous in their day, in statesmanship, war, literature, science, the fine arts, and society. A third great artist, George Romney (1734-1802), shares with these two the chief glories of the painting of their day. Inferior to them in some directions, partly through lack of sound early training, and through the instability of his disposition, he yet on occasions rose to heights as great as theirs. In such pictures as the portrait of *Mrs Lee Acton*, or

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTERS, ABOUT 1758

(VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM)

the magnificent group of children dancing in a ring—*The Stafford Family*—his art is both delicate and dignified, and exhibits a grace, and movement, and beauty of flowing line which even his rivals could not always equal.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to sketch the career, uneventful except in its artistic development, of Thomas Gainsborough, whose art, in comparison with that of Sir Joshua or Romney, is more spontaneous in its expression, and less influenced by the traditions of painting handed down from the great Italians; an art which displays that sympathetic and intimate relationship between painter and subject which makes Gainsborough's highest achievements in portraiture so singularly fascinating.

II

Thomas Gainsborough was born at Sudbury, in Suffolk, at the end of April or beginning of May, 1727. The exact date is not known, but he was baptised on May 14th of that year in the Independent Meeting House. His birthplace, in Sepulchre Street, had been originally an inn, known as the "Black Horse," one of those half-timbered, quaintly gabled buildings which are so fast disappearing from the streets of our English country towns.

The family was one of some importance in Sudbury. His father, John Gainsborough, variously described in different deeds as a milliner, clothier, and crape-maker, appears to have been one of its leading tradesmen. Ever since the days when Edward III. chose Sudbury as one of the towns in which to settle a colony of Flemish weavers, the making of "says" and "crapes" of yarn from unspun wool had been the staple trade of the place.

John Gainsborough's business was a considerable one, and was made still more profitable after he had succeeded in discovering, while on a visit to Coventry, the secret of woollen shroud-making, of which, until then, the Midland town had held the monopoly. He was able to keep this new industry in his own hands for some time. He seems, however, to have lost large sums of money, and became bankrupt in 1733, owing, it is said, to his too kindly disposition and easy good-nature, which would never allow him to press a creditor unduly. He was popular with his workpeople, too, as he always set his face against the common practice of the trade of levying on them "a toll" of a third of their weekly wages. This generosity his son Thomas inherited to an excessive degree. He travelled for business purposes as far afield as France and Holland. and is reported to have made use of his opportunities to indulge in a little smuggling on his own account. In appearance he is described as being a fine-looking old man, very careful in his dress and person, a skilful ambidextrous fencer, and loved and respected throughout the district. He died in 1748.

MRS GAINSBOROUGH (THE ARTITS'S WIFE)

(By permission of the Hon. Harold Finch-Hatton)

Little is known of Gainsborough's mother. She was a sister of the Rev. Humphry Burroughs, curate of St Gregory's, and headmaster of the Sudbury Grammar School, in which the youthful artist obtained what little book-learning he ever possessed. She was a woman of some culture and, according to Fulcher, excelled in the painting of flowers, so that Gainsborough may have inherited his love of art from her. She was, in any case, the first to encourage her son in his juvenile attempts at drawing, and lived long enough to see him a member of the Royal Academy, and at the height of his reputation as a portrait painter.

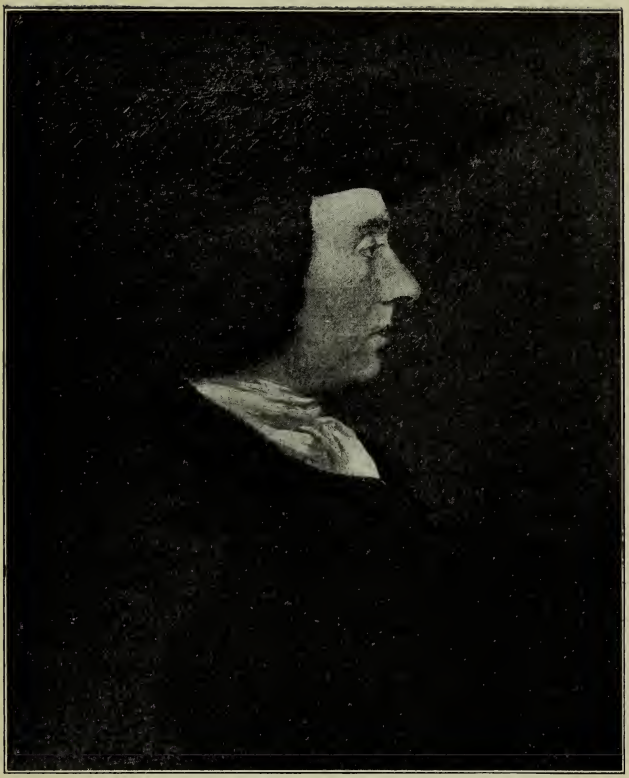
Gainsborough was the youngest of a family of nine, five sons and four daughters. His eldest brother, John, had an undoubted strain of mechanical genius in him; but, lacking all power of continued application, he was never able to profit by it. His inventions usually failed just at the critical point. He imagined he had discovered the solution of flight, but the pair of wings he evolved and attempted to manipulate in public, only carried him from the top of a summer-arbour to the bottom of a ditch. Like many another mechanical

genius, whose fame as a contriver went no further than his own parish, he was known throughout the district as "Schemer Jack." He spent much labour and money upon a time-keeper for the correcting of the longitude, and finally made up his mind to go to the East Indies to prove the utility of his invention; but he only travelled as far as London, where he was taken ill, and died. He left behind him a house full of models of all sizes and shapes, but of no practical service.

Humphry Gainsborough, the second son, was also a mechanician of great skill, but had none of the instability of purpose which characterised his elder brother. His power of invention he made only his hobby, for he settled at Henley-on-Thames as a dissenting minister, where he performed his professional duties in a fashion which endeared him to his congregation. He certainly carried out some important experiments with the steam-engine, and the members of his family seem to have been of the opinion that he was the real discoverer of the separate condenser, and that Boulton and Watt stole the idea from him. There are, however, no facts in proof of this

contention. His death, in 1776, was very sudden. He had gone out to dine with some friends near his home, and was found lying dead in the road some hours afterwards. This mechanical genius in at least two of the brothers came, no doubt, from the father, to whose ingenuity Sudbury owed the introduction of the shroud-making industry.

Little is known of Gainsborough's two remaining brothers. Matthias died as a boy, through accidentally falling on a fork, the prongs of which ran into his head. All that has been gathered of Robert is a rumour to the effect that he eloped with his first wife, and lived in Lancashire, where, later on, he married again, and had three children. There were four sisters. Mary married a dissenting minister named Gibbon, and Susannah a Mr Gardiner, both of Bath. Several of Gainsborough's letters to Mrs Gibbon have been preserved, and show that a genuine affection marked their relationship. The Rev. Edward Gardiner, a descendant of the second sister, possesses numerous works of an interesting and beautiful nature from Gainsborough's brush which have always been in the possession of his family.



JOHN GAINSBOROUGH—"SCHEMER JACK"

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

The two remaining sisters both married inhabitants of Sudbury. Elizabeth became Mrs Bird, and Sarah, Mrs Philip Dupont, and the mother of Gainsborough Dupont, who was born in 1755, and, under the training of his uncle, became a painter and engraver of no mean capacity. He occupied himself chiefly with portraiture, and, no doubt, assisted Gainsborough, during the years he resided in London, in the painting of draperies and accessories for some of the greater artist's less congenial commissions. Upon Gainsborough's death in 1788, he completed most of his uncle's unfinished works. A career of undoubted promise and some fulfilment was cut short by his death in 1797 at the age of forty-two. Dupont's artistic ability is another proof that the Gainsborough family was by no means an ordinary one.

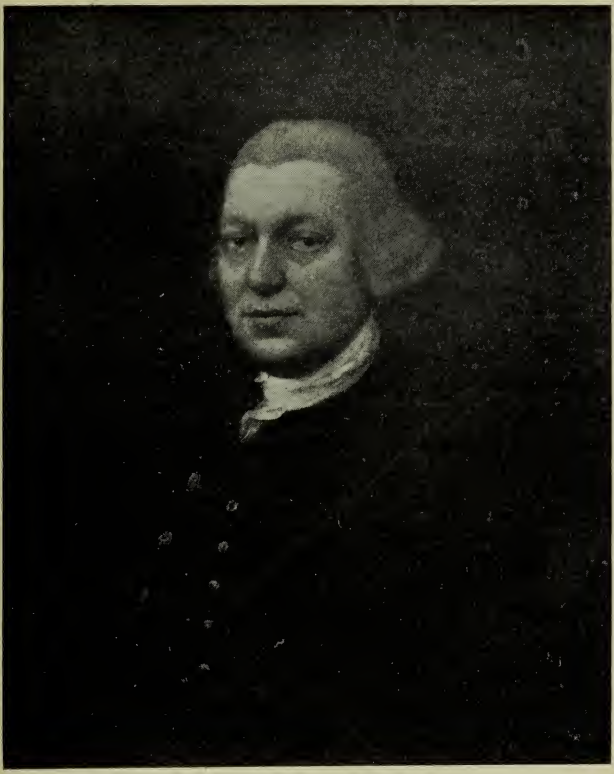
III

From quite an early age drawing became Gainsborough's favourite pursuit. According to Allan Cunningham, "at ten years old, Gainsborough had made some progress in sketching, and at twelve, was a confirmed painter." He is said to have covered his books and those of his schoolfellows, as well as the Grammar School walls, with sketches and drawings, somewhat to the neglect of his lessons. He was, undoubtedly, a lad of keen observation, and later on, he told Thicknesse that "there was not a picturesque clump of trees, nor even a single tree of any beauty, no, nor hedge-row, stem, or post," in or around his native place, which was not from his earliest years treasured in his memory.

He seems never to have been so happy as when at work with pencil in hand. He played truant from school whenever he got the chance, and was constantly begging for

holidays. On at least one occasion, when his father refused to grant it, he forged the latter's signature to a note asking his uncle the schoolmaster to "give Tom a holiday," and so procured an illicit sketching expedition. The crime, however, was discovered, and John Gainsborough declared that his son was born to be hanged; but when he had seen the drawings over which the lad had spent the day, paternal pride got the better of him, and he declared with equal emphasis that Tom would be a genius!

The boy even at this early age, had evidently made up his mind to become an artist, and his love of drawing and his artistic ability were so obvious, that he succeeded in inducing his parents to consider the question seriously. His uncle, who had married a daughter of the celebrated Dr Busby, would appear to have been a man of sense, and some appreciation of the fine arts. He was included in the family conclave, and advised that Tom should be given an opportunity of proving his capabilities for a painter's career. It was, therefore, finally resolved that he should be sent to London for a year or two for the purpose of



JOSHUA KIRBY

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

study; and to London he accordingly went in 1741 or 1742, when in his fourteenth or fifteenth year. His biographers do not agree as to the exact date.

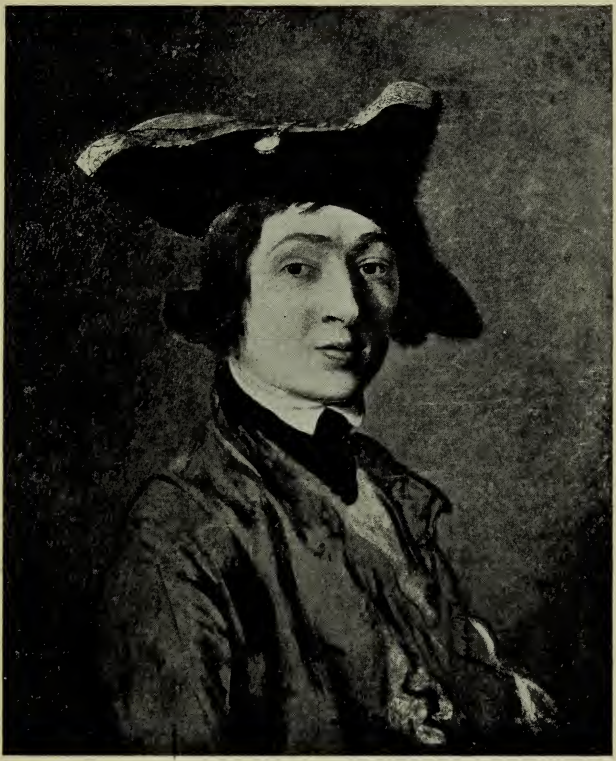
In an obituary notice of the artist, printed in "The Gentleman's Magazine," August, 1788, it is said that "the person at whose house he principally resided was a silversmith of some taste, and from him, Gainsborough was ever ready to confess he derived great assistance." There is some possibility that this unknown silversmith was one Louis Dupont, of Wardour Street, who in 1736 was entered in the Parliamentary Returns as a large-plate worker. Mention is also made, at a little later date, of a Lewis Dupont, of Compton Street, also a worker in large-plate. These two entries probably refer to the same man. (Chaffer's "Gilda Aurifabrorum," 1899.) The supposition may be hazarded that this Dupont was a relation of the Duponts of Sudbury; in which case it would be only natural that young Gainsborough should be committed to his care.

This silversmith, whoever he may have been, is said to have introduced him to Gravelot, the

engraver. Hubert François Bourguignon, called Gravelot (1699-1773), was a designer of distinction, and one of the most skilful of the book illustrators of the eighteenth century. He came to London about 1732, and remained here until 1745. He painted a few pictures, but was famous in his day for the innumerable little designs, frontispieces, and vignettes, that he made for books both in England and France. His designs had that air of distinction and delicacy of touch, which, later on, were characteristics of Gainsborough's own work. It is probable that to Gravelot's teaching may be traced that slight resemblance to the style of Watteau which is to be seen in some of the English artist's smaller portraits, little groups in landscapes, and such pictures as *The Mall.* The Frenchman's influence on the English lad was, no doubt, entirely to his advantage; although its effect upon his earlier painting is not very perceptible. It is undoubted, however, that certain of Gainsborough's drawings, made later in life, such as the sketch for a *Portrait of a Lady,* in Mr Fairfax Murray's collection (see page 93), have been mistaken more than once for the work of a Frenchman.

Gravelot, who then lived in James Street, Covent Garden, employed him in designing ornamental borders for the decoration of Houbraken's "Portraits." He is also said to have done similar work for Alderman Boydell. In this way he acquired some skill in the use of the graver and etching needle. He produced at one time or another about twenty prints, etchings, and aquatints, illustrating English scenery, some of which were published by Boydell shortly after the artist's death. Several etchings on pewter, showing all Gainsborough's characteristic freedom in the drawing of foliage, belonging to the Rev. E. R. Gardiner, are illustrated in Mrs Bell's book on the painter. Gravelot, however, does not appear to have given up much time to his pupil's instruction; but obtained for him admission to the Academy in Peter's Court, St Martin's Lane, and handed him over to the tuition of Francis Hayman.

In this Academy most of the English artists of the reign of George II., and the early part of that of George III., acquired the rudiments of education in the arts of design. No systematic course of education for the



THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, ABOUT 1745

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

training of young painters was attempted; an opportunity of studying from the life was all that was provided, but no doubt the older men, most of them but indifferent performers at the best, were willing to impart a certain amount of informal instruction. Among them Francis Hayman was a leader. English art at this time had reached its lowest ebb. The few real artists, such as Hogarth and Richard Wilson, had a hard fight of it to make a living, while foreigners like Cipriani and Zuccarelli obtained most of the patronage. There was little market for anything but a portrait, and landscapes were almost unsaleable. Gainsborough may have learnt some of the rudiments of his art in the Academy, though, happily, he remained uninfluenced by the worn-out theories and insufficient practice of most of the men who met there—a society largely made up of scene painters, inferior engravers, coach painters, the drapery assistants of portrait painters, and fourth-rate artists of all classes.

Francis Hayman was one of the best known artists in London at that time, a "man about town," constant in his attendance at cockpit and prize ring, and notorious for his conviviality

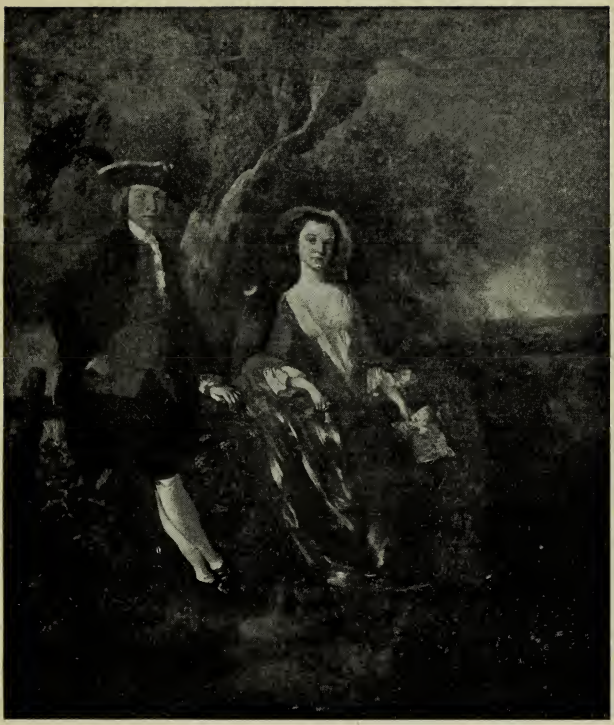
in a day when uproarious conduct was little censured. Although he accomplished nothing which has lived, he was considered to be unquestionably the best historical painter in the kingdom before the arrival of Cipriani.[1] As a mere handler of paint he was undoubtedly one of the most capable of the London artists, and for the technical side of his art Gainsborough could hardly have found a sounder instructor. If Gravelot first set him on the road which led to that grace, distinction, and refinement in the delineation of character, for which he was afterwards so celebrated, Hayman, on the other hand, taught him how his materials might be used to the best advantage. But in all other respects his influence must have been the reverse of good. Happily, the young painter seems to have taken little harm from such companionship.

Gainsborough is also said to have made the acquaintance at the St Martin's Lane Academy of Thomas Burgess, portrait and subject painter, and to have received some instruction from him. Burgess was a student there at some time in his career, and was a member of the

[1] Edward Edwards, "Anecdotes of Painting," 1808.

Society of Artists in 1766, the year of its incorporation, and contributed portraits and other pictures to its exhibitions. In 1778 he exhibited for the first time at the Royal Academy, *William the Conqueror Dismounted by his Eldest Son,* and other pictures, and continued to send contributions until 1786. He was a teacher of reputation, and kept an Academy in Maiden Lane, but whether he had any influence upon Gainsborough's art, it is now difficult, if not impossible, to say.

After three years' tuition such as this, and hard work in the Academy, Gainsborough resolved to make a start upon his own account, and for this purpose took rooms in Hatton Garden, where he set up as a landscape and portrait painter, though with but scant success. People were in no hurry to sit to him, and for the few small portraits he painted he received fees varying from three to five guineas. Art was about as poorly paid as it could be in those days. Hayman's usual price for a drawing—and he was at the top of the ladder—was two guineas, while other English designers rarely got more than one. For his landscapes Gainsborough was only able to extract a few shillings



PORTRAIT OF A LADY AND GENTLEMAN, ABOUT 1753

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

from dealers far from anxious to buy. It is said that he also practised modelling with some measure of success, particularly with figures of animals, some of which became popular in the shops where plaster casts were sold. Throughout his life he occasionally tried his hand at this kind of work, chiefly as an amusement, and what little he did in this way was spoken of with high praise by those who saw it. After twelve months of this existence, finding livelihood in London too precarious, with sitters almost unknown and dealers hard of heart, he made up his mind to return home, and was back again in Sudbury in 1745 after an absence of four years.

IV

After his return to Sudbury, Gainsborough devoted himself heart and soul to the serious study of landscape painting. Early and late he was at work in the fields, lanes and woods of the Stour valley; and in landscape nature seems to have been his first and truest teacher. Careful, realistic drawing of all that he saw was his principal occupation. He did not trouble himself much about composition, but was content to take the scene just as it appeared before him. There are certain very early pictures in existence, however, which critics acknowledge to be by his brush, in which composition of a somewhat elaborate nature has been attempted. In these a number of incoherent elements have been thrown together to form an "ideal landscape." Sir Walter Armstrong suggests that the influence of Richard Wilson was a factor in their evolution, but to accept this we must give up the well-

known tradition that Wilson never painted a landscape until he visited Italy, which was five or six years after Gainsborough had left London. In any case these elaborate compositions were few in number, and he soon abandoned such false idealism.

According to tradition, as recorded by Allan Cunningham, it was while sketching among the woods near Sudbury that he first met his future wife, an unknown maiden, who suddenly stepped into the landscape and the painter's heart at the same moment. This story, however, is, probably, only a poetic fiction. The lady, Miss Margaret Burr, was the sister of one of John Gainsborough's commercial travellers, or, according to another authority, of a partner in the business, and in a small town like Sudbury the two families must have been acquainted. During his residence in London the little girl was growing up into the beautiful young woman whose good looks for many years remained a tradition in Sudbury. Gainsborough now undertook to paint her portrait, and before the colours were dry on the canvas, had fallen deeply in love with her. The admiration was mutual, and a short courtship ended in a youth-

MUSIDORA. (National Gallery)

ful and happy marriage. There was some mystery attached to Margaret Burr's birth. Throughout her life she received an annuity of £200, which was paid with great regularity, but she does not seem to have known from what source it came. According to Cunningham, she was said to be the natural daughter of one of our exiled Princes, which she herself believed to be true; but the regularity of the yearly payments is only one of several reasons against the truth of this story. Another current rumour was to the effect that the Duke of Bedford was her father, and some writers have detected a likeness between her portrait and those of members of the Bedford family.

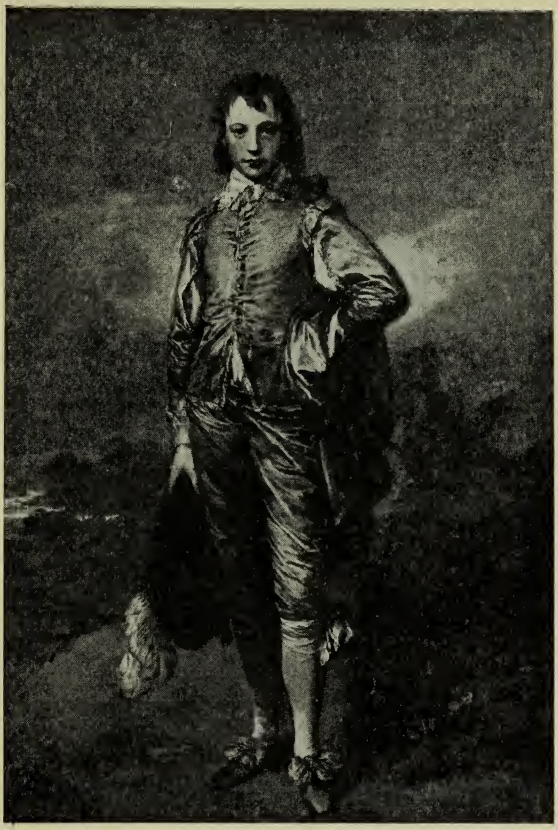
She was eighteen when she married Gainsborough, who was himself only a year older. Her annuity, modest enough as it appears to-day, must have proved invaluable to the artist, enabling him to continue his study of landscape without constant worry as to ways and means, and doing away with any immediate necessity for devoting his whole time to the search for sitters at a few guineas a head. After living for six months in Friar's Street, Sudbury, the young couple resolved to

make a move to Ipswich, expecting to find in the larger town greater opportunities for profitable occupation. Here they took a small house in Brook Street at the low rental of £6 a year.

In the earlier days of his residence in Ipswich, when worthy townsfolk showed no great anxiety to have their portraits painted, Gainsborough continued to spend most of his time out of doors, not only painting landscapes, but making many drawings and innumerable studies, some of them finished works and others mere hasty memoranda of atmospheric and other effects, which formed the groundwork of all the splendid landscapes of his Bath and later periods. He took, too, as his models the country people about him, when occupied with their daily tasks in field or farmyard, and began that placing of small figures in his rural scenes which, later on, he developed with such delightful results.

In those days no National Gallery or Wallace Collection opened its doors to students seeking knowledge or inspiration, and there were no private collections to which the public could gain access; but, no doubt, the young artist

came across examples of the art of the Low Countries in some of the Suffolk houses which he visited for the purpose of painting the owners' portraits, and probably made copies of some of them. The influence of these old Dutchmen and Flemings on Gainsborough's painting at this period is undoubted; and that of Wynants is, perhaps, to be detected to a greater extent than any other, though, later on, the freer methods of handling and the more positive colour of Rubens had a certain effect on his style, while in some few of his canvases there is evidence of his admiration for Albert Cuyp, and others. Wynants, though no brilliant artist, had a genuine feeling for nature, and attempted to reproduce her truthfully, and so appealed to the young student. Even in his earliest landscapes, however, Gainsborough's colouring is less heavy than the Dutchman's, and his handling is lighter. Echoes, more or less faint, of Ruysdael and Hobbema can also be detected in those pictures which date from his earlier Ipswich days. The *Great Cornard Wood,* in the National Gallery (see page 3), is a typical example of this period.



THE BLUE BOY

(*By permission of the Duke of Westminster*)

It is a faithful transcript of nature, with little attempt at selection, and painted with all the love for the rendering of minute detail which characterised the seventeenth century art of the Low Countries. It represents a group of oak trees on the outskirts of a wood, through which a road runs towards the distant village of Cornard, whose church spire can just be seen on the horizon. A deep pool on the right reflects some of the trees. Several groups of small figures give animation to the scene. There is little positive colour in it, as it is largely a study in different tones of grey, though the smoke of the London atmosphere has turned it a little hot and brown. It is only in the delicacy of the handling that it foreshadows greater powers in rendering landscape than can be found in the models on which it was based. In its technical qualities it gives, in spite of much minute realism, indications of a freer touch than is to be seen in several still earlier pictures of his, such as the one in the National Gallery of Ireland—a freedom which in his later landscapes was carried so far that it eventually became a mere mannerism.

V

Among a host of friends and acquaintances made by Gainsborough during the thirteen years he spent in Ipswich, two men stand out prominently in the history of his life. One of them was John Joshua Kirby, who first encountered the artist when he was sketching near Freston Tower on the banks of the Orwell. They had kindred tastes, and the chance acquaintanceship thus made soon ripened into close friendship. Kirby was at that time a painter of coach panels and had some talent for landscape; but he was best known as an authority on perspective. He published a book on this science — "Dr Brook Taylor's Method of Perspective Made Easy"—for which Gainsborough etched one of the plates. The two men spent much time together, and undertook a number of sketching expeditions in company. Kirby, however, left Ipswich for London in 1753, where he eventually became President

of the Incorporated Society of Artists. About the year 1758 he sent his only son, William, to Ipswich, to study under Gainsborough. William Kirby was clever, and later on went to Italy to complete his training at the expense of George III.; but died suddenly on his return to England in 1771. His father, greatly overcome by this calamity, did not long survive him.

The second friend, who had a more active influence on Gainsborough's life, was Philip Thicknesse. At the time of their first acquaintanceship, about 1747, Thicknesse was Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort, near Harwich. He came of an aristocratic family, and was the father of George Touchet, Baron Audley. Most of Gainsborough's biographers have treated Thicknesse with scant courtesy. Fulcher, in particular, is very bitter. He says of him:—"Handsome and insolent, a soldier and a bully, the father of a peer and a scandaliser of the nobility, he abused every privilege and neglected no opportunity of self-injury. He had, in a remarkable degree, the faculty of lessening the number of his friends, and increasing the number of his enemies.

LIEUT.-COL. ST LEGER

(*By permission of H. M. the King*)

He was perpetually imagining insult and would sniff injury from afar. * * * Contention was essential to his existence,"—and so on. It seems undoubted, however, that he had some good qualities among his numerous faults, or Gainsborough, who was by no means tolerant of those whose nature was not in sympathy with his own, would never have remained intimate with him for so many years. Thicknesse evidently liked to pose as a patron of art, and as the "discoverer" of Gainsborough's genius. At their first meeting he showed real discernment in his admiration for the young artist's landscape work. In his own words:—"Mr Gainsborough received me in his painting-room, in which stood several portraits, truly drawn, perfectly like, but stiffly painted and worse coloured; among them was the late Admiral Vernon's, for it was not many years after he had taken Porto Bello, with six ships only; but when I turned my eyes to his little landscapes and drawings, I was charmed; these were the works of fancy and gave him infinite delight."

Fulcher speaks of his "parasitical patronage" of the painter, which "at length well-nigh

choked him." Thicknesse, however, undoubtedly acted as a useful spur to Gainsborough, and was of real service to the painter by urging him to make the most of his great gifts. Nor did he confine himself to mere advice. Almost at once he gave him a commission for a large landscape, containing a distant view of Harwich, with Landguard Fort, and the Royal yachts passing the Garrison and saluted by the guns. He was so pleased with the result—which unfortunately soon perished from damp—that he took it to London, and persuaded Major to engrave it. No doubt such an engraving would help, to some small extent, to make Gainsborough's name known beyond Suffolk. It was owing to Thicknesse's persuasions, too, that Gainsborough finally determined to leave Ipswich and try his fortunes in the wider and more lucrative field to be found in such a city as Bath. In this way he was not only of service to the artist, but to all lovers of art who have come after him; and for this much can be forgiven him, and much of his boastfulness and well-meant but irritating interference forgotten.

During the years of his residence in Ipswich

Gainsborough's time was fairly well occupied with the painting of portraits, though his fees were but moderate. It was his habit to visit many of his sitters in their own homes, and we find him as far afield as Colchester, Southwold, and elsewhere. The Rev. Mr Hingeston, of Southwold, whose portrait he painted, as well as other members of his family, was a good friend to him. This gentleman's son, writing to an acquaintance, gives us an interesting appreciation of Gainsborough's character and some of the work he was engaged upon at that period. He says:—"I remember Gainsborough well, he was a great favourite of my father; indeed his affable and agreeable manners endeared him to all with whom his profession brought him in contact, either at the cottage or the castle; there was that peculiar bearing which could not fail to leave a pleasing impression. Many houses in Suffolk, as well as in the neighbouring county, were always open to him, and their owners thought it an honour to entertain him. I have seen the aged features of the peasantry lit up with a grateful recollection of his many acts of kindness and benevolence. My father's residence bears

MRS SIDDONS. (National Gallery)

testimony alike to his skill as a painter, and his kindness as a man; for the panels of several of the rooms are adorned with the productions of his genius. In one, is a picture of Gainsborough's two daughters, when young; they are engaged in chasing a butterfly."

Among his other portraits of this period may be mentioned those of Mr Robert Edgar, a solicitor of Colchester and Ipswich, and his sisters, the Misses Katherine and Elizabeth Edgar; the portrait of Admiral Vernon, which Thicknesse noted on his first visit to Gainsborough's studio, and now in the National Portrait Gallery; and the half length of Miss Hippesley belonging to Sir Charles Tennant. Mr Kilderbee, of Ipswich, who possessed a number of his pictures and portraits, including the famous *Mall*, was also one of his intimates, the friendship lasting throughout their lives. Gainsborough painted portraits of his wife and of his little daughters, Margaret and Mary, a number of times. The one of the two girls illustrated on page 7 is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The full length of the same children in a landscape, one of whom is chasing a butterfly, has been mentioned already.

The Rev. Edward Gardiner, grandson of the artist's sister, possesses an exceedingly beautiful group of them at about the same age, in which one has her arms round the neck of the other; and there are several more in existence. One of these, representing them at a later period of life, with drawing portfolios, before an antique statue, was sold in December, 1902, at Christie's Auction Rooms, for 5600 guineas. It was at one time in the collection of Sir Thomas Baring, and as recently as 1888 only fetched 211 guineas.

The portrait of his wife (see page 11), belonging to the Hon. Harold Finch-Hatton, is of a later date. The fine profile of his brother John, the "Schemer," in Mr Fairfax Murray's collection (see page 15), with dark hair covering his ears, and a black three-cornered hat, is a masterly work of unusual interest, and in the truth and severe simplicity of its drawing, and in its delineation of character, recalls more than one portrait of Holbein, to whose style it has a curious resemblance. Another early portrait is that of Joshua Kirby (see page 19), of which a contemporary mezzotint by Dixon exists. He wears a short white wig and a

dark red coat. It is signed with the initials "T. G." on the background. This portrait is also marked by careful, firm and solid painting, and by its sympathetic insight. The amiable disposition of this worthy man, Gainsborough's firm friend while he lived, has been very admirably rendered in a simple straightforward manner. It was formerly in the possession of the Trimmer family, the descendants of Kirby's literary daughter.

The unfinished portrait of the artist himself as a young man (see page 23), probably dating from about the time of his marriage, was formerly in the collection of Mr George Richmond, R.A. He wears a blue coat, and a black three-cornered hat, and his hair, unpowdered, falls over his ears. The likeness of the handsome lad to the later portraits of Gainsborough, painted by himself, is unmistakable. The same methods and qualities which characterised the portraits of his brother and his friend are to be seen here, while the dress is indicated with more of the boldness and hasty touch with which his later work is marked. Both this portrait and that of Kirby, as well as others of Mr and Mrs Kirby, senior,

THE MALL, ST JAMES'S PARK

(By permission of Lt.-Col. Sir Audley Neeld, Bart., C.B.)

Haviland, the engraver, and Philip Dupont, are in the collection of Mr Fairfax Murray. The latter was, in all probability, Gainsborough's brother-in-law, though Fulcher does not mention his Christian name.

Several small portrait-groups, dating from his Suffolk period, are also in existence, of which the one illustrated on page 27, a *Lady and Gentleman in a Landscape*, is a fine example. The lady is seated on a bank beneath a tree, while her husband stands by her side leaning against the fence of a cornfield. A distant view of a village is shown on the right. This is a charming little picture, and there is a demure and dainty grace in its rendering, more particularly in the figure of the lady, which is very fascinating. Although much of it is painted with the careful realism which marks his Ipswich manner, particularly in such details as the gnarled tree-trunk behind the youthful couple, yet in parts, such as the orange dress of the lady, it is treated with a breadth and freedom which foreshadow his later productions. It belongs to Mr Fairfax Murray.

Another family with whom the Gainsboroughs were intimate was that of the

Rev. Mr Coyte, who resided near Sudbury. Members of the same family were among the leading citizens of Ipswich. Every biographer of Gainsborough has told the story of his painting, as a lad, the *Head of a Man looking over a Wall,* known as *Tom Peartree.* According to Fulcher, the incident happened in the orchard at the back of his father's house, but the writer in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (1788), says that it took place in the Rev. Mr Coyte's garden. "In the neighbourhood of his father's," says the latter, "was a very respectable clergyman, of the name of Coyte. With the sons of this gentleman young Gainsborough and his brothers passed much of their time, and from the instructions of the old man reaped some advantage. The parson's garden having been plundered of a great quantity of wall-fruit, much pains was taken, but without effect, to discover the thief. Young Gainsborough having, one summer morning, risen at an early hour, and walked into the garden to make a sketch from an old elm, seated himself in an obscure corner, and had just taken out his chalk to begin, when he observed a fellow's head peeping over the

wall of the garden, which was next the road, with an apparent intention of seeing if the coast was clear. He made a sketch upon a rough board, of the head of the man; and so accurate was the resemblance, that he was instantly known to be a man from a neighbouring village, and, upon a close enquiry, proved to be the fellow who had before robbed the garden." This figure seems, later on, to have been painted more carefully, and cut out to shape. It came into the possession of Mr W. Creighton, editor of the "Ipswich Journal," and a friend of the artist. He was in the habit of fixing it up on his own garden wall, and it was there that Thicknesse first saw it, and believed it to be a real person, and, through his admiration for its cleverness, sought out the painter of it. It was lent by the great-grandson of Mr Creighton to the Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition in 1885.

All these early portraits are painted with the greatest care, and a close fidelity to nature, while the colour is quiet and restrained. There is little or none of the rapid and brilliant handling of his later Bath period. They possess, however, an undoubted charm, and already

LANDSCAPE WITH CATTLE, ABOUT 1775

(By permission of R. W. Hudson, Esq.)

have something of that air of distinction which became one of the most marked characteristics of his style. His little groups have a somewhat formal grace, combined with freshness and simplicity, and bear a certain likeness to French painting of the period, which he may have gained almost unconsciously from Gravelot.

VI

Most of Gainsborough's biographers fix the year 1760 as the date of his removal to Bath, following Fulcher, who says that the date, 1758, given by Allan Cunningham, is not correct. In support of this statement, he instances a letter which is dated August 12th, 1759, written by Joshua Kirby to his son William, shortly after the latter had been sent to Ipswich to study under Gainsborough. In spite of this evidence, Cunningham seems to have been right. In a letter sent from Bath by Paul Whitehead to Lord Harcourt, dated December 5th, 1758, this now forgotten poet says:—"We have a painter here who takes the most exact likenesses I ever saw; his painting is coarse and slight, but has ease and spirit. Lord Villiers sat to him before he left Bath, and, I hope, we shall be able to bring his picture to town with us, as it is he himself, and is preferable, in my opinion, to

the finest unlike picture in the universe, though it might serve for a sign. He sat only twice. The painter's name is Gainsborough." Again, in the following letter from Mrs Delany to Mrs Dewes, dated Bath, October 23rd, 1760, the reference to several portraits painted by him seems to indicate that the artist had already been resident in the city for some time. "This morning," she says, "I went with Lady Westmoreland to see Mr Gainsborough's pictures (the man that painted Mr Wise and Mr Lucy), and they may well be called what Mr Webb *unjustly* says of Rubens—that they are *splendid impositions.* There I saw Miss Ford's picture — a whole length with her guitar, a most extraordinary figure, handsome and bold; but I should be sorry to see anyone I loved set forth in such a manner." Miss Ford became the second wife of Thicknesse. This portrait now belongs to Mr C. J. Wertheimer. The famous viol-di-gamba, which led to the final rupture between Gainsborough and Thicknesse, stands by the curtain in the background. Mrs Delany's objection to the style of this portrait, shows that the artist was already changing his methods and develop-

THE WATERING-PLACE, about 1775. (National Gallery)

ing his "Bath manner," and points to a longer sojourn in the west than a few months.

It was, no doubt, largely owing to the advice of Thicknesse, who owned a house there, in which he spent a part of each year, that Gainsborough resolved to try his fortunes in Bath. Sitters were not too numerous in Suffolk, and purchasers of landscapes were still more rare. These considerations, added to the Lieutenant-Governor's enthusiastic advocacy, were sufficient to induce Gainsborough to take the most important step in his whole career. Most likely he went there in the autumn of 1758 with the intention of only remaining for the season, and returned to Ipswich during the following summer, where young Kirby then joined him. The success which attended his first visit to Bath was such that he resolved to make his permanent home in the western city, and so finally left Ipswich, with wife, family, and pupil about the autumn of 1759.

At that time Bath was the most fashionable watering-place in England, crowded every season with notabilities and the very cream of society, each one bent upon nothing but enjoyment and the spending of money, and

so a most promising field for a portrait painter. No greater contrast could be imagined than the life in this bright and frivolous city and in the sedate and sleepy town on the banks of the Orwell. Lodgings were taken in the new and fashionable Circus[1] at a yearly rental of fifty pounds, which seemed extravagantly high to the cautious Mrs Gainsborough, when compared with her modest six pounds tenement in Ipswich. "Fifty pounds a year, Mr Gainsborough!" she exclaimed—"Are you going to throw yourself into a gaol?" Thicknesse, however, who made the selection for them, calmed her fears by assuring her that a good and central position was half the battle, and that high fees were bound to result in consequence. According to all reports Margaret Gainsborough carried caution in money matters to the verge of meanness, largely, no doubt, to counteract her husband's excessive extravagance. When, twenty years later, Queen Charlotte asked Fischer, the Gainsboroughs' son-in-law, whether the lady approved of her husband's squandering, he replied in his broken English, "Nod at all!

[1] No. 24. A mural tablet was placed upon it by the Bath Corporation in the summer of 1902.

—nod at all, may it please you, madam. Mine moder-in-law is twin sister of the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street. She shall not be gondent, if mine fader-in-law pour into her lap the amoundt of the whole national tebdt!"

Thicknesse was a true prophet. Gainsborough's success was assured from the outset. His only rival in this new field was William Hoare, the pastellist, afterwards one of the foundation members of the Royal Academy, whose crayon portraits were much in vogue; but the fickle society of Bath deserted his studio almost at once for that of the newcomer. Like Gainsborough, he was a Suffolk man, the son of a farmer. His portraits were naturally and solidly painted, and full of character.

Thicknesse offered to sit for his likeness, in order that it might be exhibited to tempt other sitters, but it was barely begun before it was laid aside, for Gainsborough's art needed no advertisement, and so quickly did he take the town that he was busy with commissions from the very first. Almost at once he was obliged to raise his modest price for a head from five to eight guineas, and these fees gradually increased until his usual charge was forty

LANDSCAPE, ABOUT 1760

(By permission of Henry J. Pfungst, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs W. A. Mansell & Co.

guineas for a half, and one hundred for a whole length.

Gainsborough spent fifteen happy years in Bath. His art developed very rapidly, and it was here that he "found himself." His handling became freer and more certain every year, and his colour finer. He now, for the first time, had an opportunity, in some of the great houses in the neighbourhood, such as Wilton, of studying the works of many of the best of the old masters, notably the Flemings. Until then, he can only have had access to a few examples of the landscapists of the seventeenth century; but soon after arriving in Bath he fell under the influence of Van Dyck, who remained his favourite master for the rest of his life. He now saw possibilities in portraiture which were undreamt of when he was in Suffolk, and he was not slow to profit by the lesson. He made, from time to time, a number of brilliant studies and copies of paintings by Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Murillo, and Titian, as well as a number of Dutch landscapes.

Here, too, he found most congenial companionship. Mixing in more or less intimacy

with all ranks, his friends he made chiefly among those whose life-work was the pursuit of one or other of the arts. Gainsborough's life-long passion for music, which he largely developed at this time, naturally threw him much among the society of musicians, and it was in the midst of such a family as the Linleys, who ruled the musical world of Bath, that he was probably happiest and most at home. Thomas Linley was the favourite singing-master of his day, the conductor of all the concerts, and known throughout England for his great abilities. The musician's house "was always open, hospitable and bright," and the artist was soon established there on a footing of close friendship. He painted their portraits, especially that of the lovely Elizabeth, the fair "Maid of Bath," who was a little girl when he first knew her, and who afterwards became the wife of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He painted her several times, both before and after marriage, notably in the fine picture at Knole with her young brother Tom, and finally in that most lovely rendering of grace and beauty (see page 121), which now belongs to Lord Rothschild.

Among other musical friends whom he painted at one time or another, were Fischer, the hautbois player, who became his son-in-law; Abel, the viol-di-gambist; Giardini, the violinist; Tenducci, the "male soprano"; John Sebastian Bach; and William Jackson of Exeter, his favourite correspondent and very intimate friend.

The stage too, had immense attractions for him. He had a close acquaintance with General Palmer, manager of the Bath Theatre, to whom, with his impulsive generosity he presented several fine pictures in return for boxes which were placed at his disposal. In this way he grew to know many of the leading players of the day. For Garrick he always had the greatest admiration, and painted his portrait a number of times, the best known one being the fine full length at Stratford-on-Avon. Quin, Foote, John Henderson, and John Edwin, were also painted by him with a vividness arising from keen sympathy with dramatic art; while among the ladies of the theatrical world placed by him upon canvas were Mrs Siddons, Mrs Robinson, Mrs Yates, and Miss Bessie Brunton. Even Vestris, the

THE COTTAGE DOOR, ABOUT 1772

(By permission of the Duke of Westminster)

man-dancer, was painted, and very admirably painted too.

Although he visited occasionally at more than one aristocratic house, and was always a welcome guest on account of his happy and lively disposition, it was among actors and musicians, and men of like nature, that he spent most of the hours which were unoccupied by painting, and it was the Bohemian life of the better kind to which he turned most naturally for recreation. Men of the type of Thicknesse were less easily tolerated. They "got on his nerves," and during the Lieutenant-Governor's periodical visits to Bath, his society became more and more tedious and troublesome to Gainsborough.

VII

In the winter of 1759-60 the artists of London formed themselves into a Society for the purpose of an annual exhibition of their works. This was the first public picture exhibition held in England. Gainsborough, almost an unknown painter at the time of the first exhibition, contributed nothing; but to the second, in 1761, he sent a full-length portrait of *Mr Nugent*, afterwards Lord Clare. In the following year, he was represented by a portrait of a famous Berkshire sportsman, *Mr William Poyntz*, brother of the first Countess Spencer, while in 1763 he exhibited a landscape for the first time, and portraits of *Mr Medlicott*, a cousin of the Edgeworths, and of *Quin*, the actor.

After the exhibition of the portrait of an unknown gentleman in 1764, he sent in the following year the fine full-length of *General Honywood*, on horseback, sword in hand, which

now belongs to Messrs Agnew & Sons. This is a splendid example of his Bath period, and shows how rapidly he had advanced since leaving Ipswich. The horse is a little wooden, and its anatomy not above suspicion, but the likeness of the soldier is a vivid one, and the effect of the scarlet coat extremely fine, while the treatment of the landscape background shows a complete change from the "tight" methods of Sudbury days to a looser, bolder, and more artistic rendering of nature. In 1766—the year in which the Society became the Society of Incorporated Artists of Great Britain, of which Gainsborough was a member—he exhibited the very striking full-length of *Garrick*, now in the Stratford-on-Avon Town Hall, already mentioned. The actor is represented leaning against a pedestal surmounted by a bust of Shakespeare, in the grounds at Wilton. In this year, he also exhibited a landscape with figures, and full lengths of a lady and gentleman, which cannot now be traced, owing to the stupid fashion of the time, still followed occasionally in France and England to-day, of entering portraits in the catalogue without name.

EARLY LANDSCAPE DRAWING—"PLOUGHING"

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

During the next two years he sent five portraits to London,—of *Lady Grosvenor; John, Duke of Argyll; Mr Vernon,* son of Lord Vernon; *Captain Needham,* in the uniform of the Grenadier Guards; and *Captain Augustus Hervey,* afterwards Earl of Bristol, in naval uniform, which Horace Walpole considered to be one of the best modern portraits he had seen. In 1768 Garrick proposed that he should paint an ideal portrait of Shakespeare for the Jubilee at Stratford in 1769. The artist received the suggestion with some amount of enthusiasm, and made more than one preliminary attempt before finally abandoning the subject as too difficult of execution. At all times Gainsborough needed the inspiration of some subject directly visible to his eyes before he could achieve his finest results. The inspiration would come in a moment's flash if at all, and he had little capacity for thinking out a subject such as his great rival Sir Joshua possessed to so eminent a degree. The mental effort necessary for such an undertaking was beyond him, so that he rarely attempted anything in the nature of ideal painting, and, unlike Reynolds and Romney, never troubled himself

about the "grand style." With very few exceptions his pictures were either portraits of his contemporaries or landscapes. He did not even paint his sitters in semi-classical disguise, as Hebe, Euphrosyne, or Diana. His "fancy subjects" were confined to pictures of rustic children, and scenes from country life. His *Musidora* in the National Gallery, and an unfinished picture of *Diana and Actæon* in Windsor Castle, make up almost the whole sum of his achievements in the "classical" field. There is little doubt, indeed, that in the painting of such ideal subjects he never had any desire to excel. He found the proposed portrait of Shakespeare, in which he told Garrick he intended "to take the form from the Bard's pictures and statues, just enough to preserve his likeness past the doubt of all blockheads at first sight, and supply a soul from his works," a much harder task than he had expected. He writes to Garrick, in a letter dated 22nd August, 1768:—"I have been several days rubbing in and rubbing out my design of Shakespeare, and hang me if I think I shall let it go, or let you see it at last. I was willing, like an ass as I am, to expose myself a little

out of the simple portrait way, and had a notion of showing where that inimitable poet had his ideas from, by an immediate ray darting down upon his eye turned up for the purpose; but confound it, I can make nothing of my ideas, there has been such a fall of rain from the same quarter. You shall not see it, for I will cut it before you can come. . . . Shakespeare's bust is a silly smiling thing, and I have not sense enough to make him more sensible in the picture, and so I tell ye, you shall not see it. I must make a plain picture of him standing erect, and give it an old look, as if it had been painted at the time he lived; and there we shall fling 'em."

In a second letter to the actor, he says that he has been ill, but still promises to finish the picture; but in spite of these protestations, it seems, finally, to have been abandoned. In the same letter, he speaks of some recently finished portraits in a way which shows how decidedly he had given himself up to the influence of Van Dyck. "I could wish you," he says, "to call upon any pretence at the Duke of Montague's, because you would see the Duke and Duchess in my *last* manner; but

STUDY FOR A LANDSCAPE

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

not as if you thought anything of mine worth that trouble, only to see his Grace's landscape of Rubens, and the four Vandykes, whole lengths, in his Grace's dressing-room."

Towards the end of 1768 the Royal Academy was founded, and Gainsborough was chosen as one of the original foundation members, as was only natural after the series of fine portraits he had been sending to London for some years past. To the Academy's first exhibition in 1769, he contributed two portraits of *Isabella, Lady Molyneux,* and of *George Pitt,* first Lord Rivers, as well as a "Boy's Head" and a large landscape. In the following year, in addition to a landscape and a "Book of Drawings," he was represented by five portraits, but the identity of the sitters can be traced only in one case, a three-quarter length of *Garrick.* It has been suggested by some writers, however, that the *Portrait of a Young Gentleman* was possibly the famous *Blue Boy.* This supposition arises from a letter written by Miss Mary Moser, R.A., to Fuseli, who was then in Italy, in which, while gossiping about the exhibition, she says that "Gainsborough is beyond himself in

a portrait of a gentleman in a Vandyke habit."

In 1771 he again sent five portraits, which included the *Lady Sussex and her daughter Lady Barbara Yelverton*, now belonging to Lord Burton; the magnificent *Lady Ligonier in fancy dress*; *Lord Ligonier with a horse*; *Captain Wade*, who succeeded Beau Nash as the Master of the Ceremonies at Bath; and *Mr Nuthall*, the friend of Pitt. His two landscapes with figures, in the same exhibition, were characterised by Horace Walpole as "very good, but too little finished," a criticism which proves that Gainsborough's methods of painting landscape during the twelve years spent in Bath had completely changed. The same fault has been found in them by many people during the past hundred years. In 1772 his contributions included four portraits, eight landscape drawings, and "Two Landscapes, drawings, in imitation of Oil Painting," which the same critic noted as most effective, but too like needlework. These were the last pictures sent by Gainsborough to the Royal Academy for four years, for in 1773 he had the first of those disputes with its Council which, unfor-

tunately, occurred too often. Nothing is known of the origin of this quarrel, except that, according to Walpole, whose notes on the exhibitions have ever since proved of the greatest service to art-biographers, the disagreement was with Sir Joshua, and that George Dance, R.A., shared in it.

In 1772 he was engaged upon a third portrait of *Garrick*, who delighted to be painted, and had sat, in turn, to every portrait painter of note then living. He was represented full face, in laced clothes and a book in his right hand. Gainsborough made a replica of it himself for presentation to a Mr Clutterbuck, "that he may," he says in a letter to Garrick, "one day tell me what to do with my money, the only thing he understands except jeering of folks." In this year, too, the young actor, John Henderson, made his first appearance on the Bath stage in the part of "Hamlet," taking the town by storm, and delighting Gainsborough, who soon became his fast friend, and painted his portrait at least twice. The artist took an almost paternal interest in Henderson's future career, as can be gathered from his letters to the actor. "Pray, my boy,"

STUDY FOR A LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES

(For a Picture formerly in Lord Dudley's Collection)

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.) *Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell*

he says in one of them, "take care of yourself this hot weather, and don't run about London streets, fancying you are catching strokes of nature, at the hazard of your constitution. It was my first school, and deeply read in petticoats I am, therefore you may allow me to caution you. Stick to Garrick as close as you can, for your life! You should follow his heels like his shadow in sunshine."

Among other undated works of his Bath period may be mentioned portraits of *Lord Camden*; of *Richardson*, the novelist; *Laurence Sterne*, the head only; *Cramer*, the metallurgist; and various members of the Linley family. Another very fine Bath portrait was that of *Edward Orpin*, Parish Clerk of Bradford-on-Avon, now in the National Gallery, probably one of his earliest works after leaving Ipswich, as it is painted with loving care and fidelity, but with little of the freedom of touch which he was soon to display. The old man, with his Bible in front of him, is looking up towards the window through which the sunlight pours. It is a noble effort, over which the artist has spent his best powers. Another beautiful portrait was that of the dark-haired *Lady Mary*

Carr, painted some years later, for the manner in which the crimson silk dress is rendered shows that Gainsborough had begun to feel the spell of Van Dyck and to glory in colour for its own sake, while at the same time the care with which he has rendered the fine lace upon her gown, and the bunch of flowers at her breast, and the ornaments in her hair, proves that he had not yet thrown off his earlier method in the exactness of detail. The hands, too, are very carefully and beautifully painted, in striking contrast to some of his later portraits, in which they are indifferently or carelessly drawn. This picture has already that air of distinction which is so marked when Gainsborough is at his best. He also painted, about 1766, *John Plampin,* great-grandson of the Earl of Bristol, as a boy in a white satin Van Dyck dress, holding a book; while among other sitters of the latter half of his Bath period were the *Duchess of Grafton; Lord Chesterfield;* the *fourth Duke of Bedford;* the *Duchess of Montagu; Mrs Catherine Macaulay,* the historian; *Miss Tyler,* the aunt of Robert Southey; *Lord Kilmorey, Mr Moysey; Dr Charlton;* and a group of *Mr and Mrs*

Dehaney, of Hayes Park, Kent, and their daughter.

According to the writer of the obituary notice in the "Gentleman's Magazine," "it was with a degree of veneration that Mr G. always spoke of Mr Ralph Allen, Earl Camden, and a few other gentlemen, for the patronage and favour they extended to him at Bath." A more humble friend was Wiltshire, the carrier, who, having a pretty taste for the fine arts, always refused payment for carrying the painter's pictures to London. Gainsborough, not to be beaten in generosity, gave him several fine canvases, notably *The Parish Clerk*, *The Harvest Wagon*, and portraits of Quin and Foote. Wiltshire, in return, presented him with an old white horse which served as a model in more than one picture, including *The Harvest Wagon*. The very fine study of a horse, No. 1484 in the National Gallery, was, no doubt, a faithful portrait of the carrier's gift.

Philip Thicknesse, who had so much to do with Gainsborough's removal to Bath, seems also to have been one of the main causes of his leaving it for London fifteen years

STUDY OF A MAN WATERING HORSES
(ORIGINAL SKETCH FOR THE PICTURE IN SIR CHARLES TENNANT'S COLLECTION)
(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)
Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

afterwards. The story of their quarrel has been told from both sides, and it is now difficult to get at the exact truth of it; but Gainsborough's love for music appears to have had much to do with it. He had a mania for acquiring fine and rare musical instruments, and fell in love with a very beautiful viol-di-gamba, belonging to Mrs Thicknesse, for which he offered her husband one hundred guineas on more than one occasion. He had painted the lady's portrait just before her marriage, and in sending it to London to Thicknesse, had rolled it within one of his landscapes of the same size in order to protect it—a very original way of ensuring its safety, and a good example of Gainsborough's almost reckless generosity where his friends were concerned. Mrs Thicknesse eventually presented Gainsborough with the instrument. She offered it as a gift, but asked him, in return, to paint her husband's portrait to hang by the side of her own, and this the artist gladly agreed to do. He made a start at once, finished Thicknesse's head, put in his Newfoundland dog, and roughed in the rest. After this, however, he soon began to grow

STUDY OF THE ARTIST SKETCHING BY AID OF A MIRROR

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)
Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

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weary of the task. The picture remained in this condition for a long period, having the appearance, as Thicknesse put it, "of a drowned man ready to burst." The lady, when she saw it, gave way to tears, and begged Gainsborough to put it in his garret; which he did, and promptly returned the viol-di-gamba. Next day Thicknesse remonstrated with him, and the painter owned that he had been in the wrong. He had been guilty, he said, of a "shameful indelicacy" in accepting the instrument from the lady, and promised to finish the portrait forthwith in his very best manner.

Nine months later, however, nothing further had been done to it; and, in the end, Mrs Thicknesse wrote to Gainsborough, begging him to "take his brush, and first rub out the countenance of the truest and warmest friend he ever had, and so done, then blot him for ever from his memory."

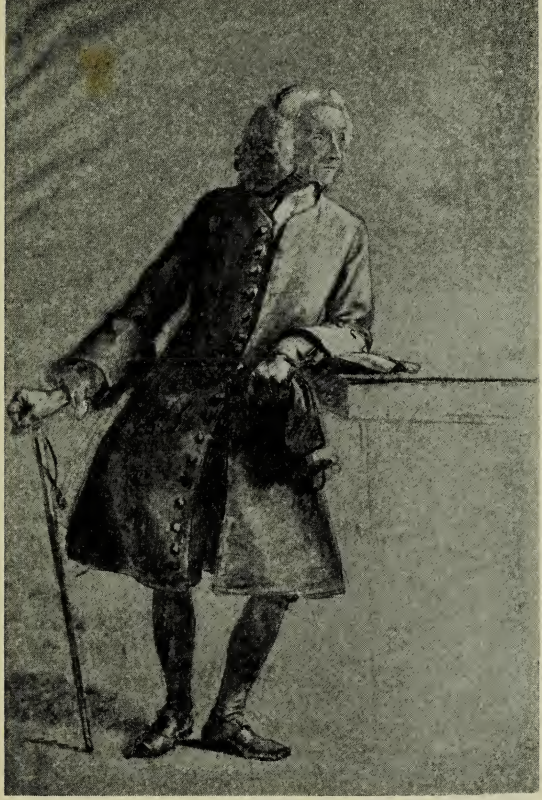
That is the case as stated by Thicknesse. A different story, however, was told by the members of Gainsborough's own family. Their version runs that the painter gave one hundred guineas to the lady in exchange for the

viol-di-gamba unknown to her husband, who thought that a portrait had been promised in return for what he imagined to be a gift. It is difficult to decide how much or little of truth there is in these two conflicting tales; but there were, no doubt, both faults and considerable displays of temper on each side. To Gainsborough the incident was the proverbial last straw, which caused him to make up his mind to leave Bath at once. His excitable artistic temperament was constantly irritated almost beyond endurance by the man to whom he felt that he owed no inconsiderable part of his success in life, and so, rather than risk further quarrelling, he ran away. In the summer of 1774 he packed up his household goods, turned his back on the town which had treated him so well for fifteen years, and set out for London.

VIII

It was under very different circumstances from those which marked his first visit to the capital, when he was a pupil of Hayman, and rented a couple of modest rooms in Hatton Garden, that Gainsborough, in 1774, for a second time took up his residence in London. He now held a position in the foremost rank of contemporary artists, and felt justified in settling down in one of the most fashionable quarters of the town. The house in which he lived for the remainder of his life, Schomberg House, Pall Mall, was one of the most remarkable buildings in that thoroughfare. Gainsborough only occupied a third part of this mansion, his landlord being John Astley, a portrait painter of no reputation, who lived in the central wing.

After "Beau" Astley, another artist of fashion, Richard Cosway, lived there. In Gainsborough's day the remaining third part



STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

of the house was occupied, from 1781, by the notorious Dr Graham, a quack of the first water, whose infallible specifics were freely purchased by a foolish public, who crowded to hear his lectures on health. His panacea for all evils was the mud-bath, and it was a favourite amusement of Society to visit Schomberg House to see him give an ocular demonstration of its efficacy. Footmen in resplendent liveries ushered the visitors into the bath-room, where the Doctor was discovered up to his neck in mud; but wearing his wig, powdered and dressed in the very latest style. Near him, in another bath, and with a head-dress of even greater elaboration, sat the fair Emma Lyon, afterwards Lady Hamilton, her charms discreetly hidden in the thick and murky fluid. At this period of her career Graham was making use of her as a living illustration to his lectures, and advertised her as the "rosy goddess of Health." In this way Romney first felt the spell of her beauty, and it was at Schomberg House that Mr Greville, Sir William Hamilton's nephew, made her acquaintance.

These lectures, with their scandalous illustrations of loveliness, and entertaining demonstrations of the power of mud, given at Gainsborough's very door, must have attracted his attention, and no doubt offered him some amusement. His picture of *Musidora*, now in the National Gallery, is said by some writers to be a portrait of the fair Emma. It is almost the only study of the nude by Gainsborough which he is known to have made, and the painting of it may have been suggested by one of Graham's discourses, while the opportunity of carrying it out would be comparatively easy, as the "fair example" was his near neighbour.

The fourteen remaining years of his life were spent in London and its neighbourhood, with occasional visits to friends or clients in the country; uneventful years too, except as regards the steady increase of his reputation, and the continual development of his art. His brush seems rarely to have been idle, and the biographical details of these years consist largely of lists of his exhibited pictures. Included among his sitters were many of the most illustrious people in the country. The leaders

of fashion and notable men and women of every rank flocked to his studio. He divided the patronage of the town with Reynolds and Romney. In many cases the same people sat to both the President and Gainsborough—and in certain instances, to all three painters. It was the fashion to be painted by one or another of them, or by lesser men if means were only moderate, so that the latter half of the eighteenth century was a prosperous time for all limners of likenesses. There was little patronage of English art, however, outside portraiture, and the unfortunate landscape painters, such as Wilson, had a continual struggle against poverty.

It is said that Sir Joshua Reynolds called upon Gainsborough soon after the latter had settled in town, probably with the idea of putting an end to the ill-feeling which had caused the Suffolk painter to stop sending his pictures to the Academy; but there is no record of a return visit, and Gainsborough continued to hold aloof for another three years. In spite of this behaviour, Gainsborough was elected on the Council of the Royal Academy, in December, 1774, though in 1775 it was

STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT OF A LADY

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

moved that his name be omitted from their lists, "he having declined to accept any office in the Academy, and never attending." This motion, however, was rescinded at the next General Meeting.

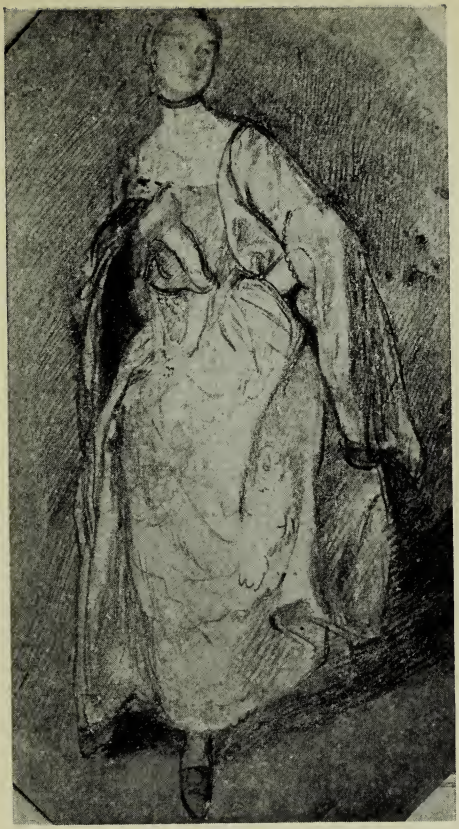
The natures of these two great painters were never sympathetic. Each had a sincere admiration for the other's art, but beyond that they had very little in common. Sir Joshua made several advances, but Gainsborough never met him half-way. The President must have been fully alive to the enhanced reputation which the Royal Academy would obtain through keeping his rival as one of its leading exhibiting members, and he appears to have had no personal dislike to Gainsborough such as he is said to have had for "that fellow" Romney, as he called him. Reynolds was a much more highly educated man, and preferred the society of those who were foremost in literature, science, or political life, numbering among his intimates some of the brightest intellects of his day; whereas Gainsborough was a true Bohemian by nature, and although the two men had a number of friends in common, notably Garrick and

Sheridan, he chose rather the companionship of those in whom wit and good-fellowship were the most marked characteristics.

Thicknesse, in spite of the manner in which Gainsborough had treated him, with an anxiety for his welfare which did him great credit, wrote to Lord Bateman, who already knew Gainsborough and admired his art, and urged him to help the painter in every way in his power, by making him known to people of importance who would further his interests. Such assistance was quite unneeded, however, and it is very doubtful if Lord Bateman had any part in introducing Gainsborough to the notice of the Court. George III., although he had little knowledge of art, was yet pleased to pose as its patron, and took considerable interest in the welfare of the youthful Academy in whose foundation he had taken a royal part. He paid visits of semi-state to its annual Exhibitions, and could not fail to notice and to appreciate the beauties of Gainsborough's achievements hanging upon the walls. The painter, in consequence, was called to Court, and received the royal command to paint His Majesty, Queen

Charlotte, and the numerous members of the reigning family. Where royalty was pleased to show approval the great world was not slow to follow its example, and for the rest of his life Gainsborough never lacked sitters in his studio. He remained, too, the King's favourite painter until the end. Reynolds, as the friend of Wilkes and many of the leading Whigs, was never received on terms of intimacy by George III., but Gainsborough was a staunch Tory throughout his life, and was smiled upon by royalty. The artist used to quote the following remark made to him by the King:—"Doubtless portraiture is a tantalising art—no pleasing your sitters, hey! all wanting to be Venuses and Adonises, hey! Well, Mr Gainsborough, since you have taken to portraiture, I suppose everyone wants your landscapes, hey! Is it not so?" "Entirely so, your Majesty," was the courtier-like reply.

He made his re-appearance at the Academy exhibition in 1777 with six whole-length portraits, and a landscape. Horace Walpole was very enthusiastic over the latter, declaring it to be "in the style of Rubens, and by far the finest landscape ever painted in England,



STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT OF A LADY

(By permission of C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.)

Photograph by Messrs Walker & Cockerell

and equal to the great masters." Four of the portraits can be traced—those of the *Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, Lord Gage,* and *Abel,* the musician. The portraits of the Duke and Duchess are now in Windsor Castle. Gainsborough painted this too notorious lady and her royal clown of a husband more than once. One of the most interesting of them is the unfinished canvas of the Duchess (see page 107), also at Windsor, as it shows the artist's method of work. He also painted this extraordinary couple again in a group, with the lady's sister, Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, small full-length figures in a large landscape. This fine picture is also in the royal collections.

The portrait of *Lord Gage* also has a good landscape background. In the one of *Abel,* a very forcible piece of work, all the details, such as the viol-di-gamba, are painted with unusual care, a frequent characteristic of Gainsborough's portraits of musicians, showing his love for the sister art, as well as the admiration of the connoisseur and collector for instruments of fine quality. He also painted a second portrait of Abel seated and playing on his viol, which displays similar qualities.

In the following year, 1778, he exhibited a still larger number of works, including two landscapes, six portraits of ladies, one of a nobleman, and one of *Mr Christie*, the auctioneer, leaning on a frame containing a landscape. Among the portraits of ladies was one of the *Duchess of Devonshire*, just twenty years of age and the observed of all eyes as the leader of fashion, whom Reynolds had painted more than once. Horace Walpole describes it as "very bad and washy." Cunningham in his "Lives" tells the following story of its painting:—"The dazzling beauty of the Duchess, and the sense which she entertained of the charms of her looks, and her conversation, took away that readiness of hand, and hasty happiness of touch, which belonged to him in his ordinary moments. The portrait was so little to his satisfaction, that he refused to send it to Chatsworth. Drawing his wet pencil across a mouth which all who saw it thought exquisitely lovely, he said, 'Her Grace is too hard for me.' The picture was, I believe, destroyed." This tale is, no doubt, a greatly exaggerated one. It is most unlikely that he would have sent to the

exhibition any picture with which he was so dissatisfied. It is a little in favour of Cunningham's tale, however, that there is to-day no portrait of the lady by Gainsborough at Chatsworth, although Sir Joshua's rendering of her with her little daughter, and the half-length, by the same painter, of that "alluring widow," Lady Elizabeth Foster, who succeeded her as the Duke's second wife, are among its finest art treasures. On the other hand, there is a full-length portrait of her at Althorp, illustrated in Mrs Bell's book, which in all probability is the picture which was exhibited in 1778, and was, perhaps, painted for her father. As far as can be judged from the reproduction this is not one of Gainsborough's most sympathetic portraits, and so, to some extent, justifies Walpole's criticism. It does not seem probable that the celebrated "lost" Duchess which Messrs Agnew & Son purchased at the Wynn Ellis sale in 1876 for £10,605, and is now in the possession of Mr Pierpont Morgan, can be the picture in question. Mr Morgan's example, the marvellous recovery of which is well known to everyone, is said to be the later portrait,

STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT OF A LADY
(British Museum)

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exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1783, but it bears little likeness to the authentic portraits of the Duchess by Reynolds, and other contemporary artists. Of the Duke's two wives, it is decidedly more like the second, Lady Betty Foster, but it may be a portrait of neither of these ladies.

Fulcher places the painting of the famous *Blue Boy* (see page 35), a portrait of Master Jonathan Buttall, the son of a rich ironmonger of Soho, and now belonging to the Duke of Westminster, early in the year 1779. His chief reason for dating it in this year seems to be the fact that on the 10th of the previous December, Sir Joshua, in his eighth Discourse to the students of the Royal Academy delivered himself of the well-known dictum to refute which, as it was commonly reported in Fulcher's day, this picture had been painted by Gainsborough. The passage in the Discourse is as follows:—"It ought, in my opinion, to be indispensably observed, that the masses of light in a picture be always of a warm, mellow colour, yellow, red, or a yellowish white; and that the blue, the grey, or the green colours be kept almost entirely out of these masses, and be used only

to support and set off these warm colours; and for this purpose, a small proportion of cold colours will be sufficient. Let this conduct be reversed; let the light be cold, and the surrounding colours warm, as we often see in the works of the Roman and Florentine painters, and it will be out of the power of Art, even in the hands of Rubens or Titian, to make a picture splendid or harmonious."

The date of this picture, however, has been hotly contested. Some writers place it as far back as 1770, in which year Mary Moser wrote to Fuseli with so much enthusiasm about the portrait of a "gentleman in a Vandyke habit," while others adhere to 1779, or even later. Sir Walter Armstrong, without hesitation, votes in favour of the earlier date. It seems more likely that Sir Joshua, still vividly remembering this picture eight years after it was painted, had it in his mind when he wrote the above passage, so that the picture was the cause and not the result of the President's address. It is hardly probable, however, after so long a lapse of time that any exact evidence will be forthcoming to fix the date of this beautiful portrait beyond a

doubt. It seems certain, in any case, that the picture was not exhibited in the Academy of 1779.

The *Blue Boy* is by no means a solitary instance of Gainsborough's use of this colour. He painted in Bath the portrait of his nephew, *Edward Gardiner*, as a lad of ten or twelve, somewhere about 1767, in a similar Van Dyck dress of blue satin, which is illustrated in Mrs Bell's book. It bears a strong likeness to the *Master Buttall.* He constantly made use of blue in varying degrees in the dress of his sitters, and had developed this fondness for cool colour years before Reynolds laid down the law about it. It was, no doubt, largely due to his study of Van Dyck. If, however, it was a genuine attempt on Gainsborough's part to prove Sir Joshua in the wrong, it cannot be said that he attacked the problem boldly. Leslie, in his "Handbook for Young Painters," puts this point very clearly when he says:—"I agree with the opinion of Sir Thomas Lawrence, that in this picture the difficulty is rather ably combated than vanquished. Indeed it is not even fairly combated, for Gainsborough has so mellowed and broken

GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT

(*By permission of Sir Edgar Vincent, K.C.M.G.*)

the blue with the other tints, that it is no longer that pure bleak colour Sir Joshua meant; and after all, though the picture is a very fine one, it cannot be doubted that a warmer tint for the dress would have made it still more agreeable to the eye."

The accounts of the subsequent history of this picture are very confusing. Several replicas of it are in existence, which at one time or another have been claimed as the original painting. After Buttall's death in 1796, his effects were sold, and the picture is said to have fallen into the hands of John Hoppner, R.A., who held it, for some reason or other, for the real owner, the Prince of Wales. Hoppner is also said to have made a fine copy of it. According to another story, a *Blue Boy* passed direct from Gainsborough's studio to the gallery of the Prince of Wales, who sold it to a boon companion, John Nesbitt, M.P., for £300, the picture remaining at his seat, at Heston, until 1820, when it again changed hands. The whole question has been discussed very fully on more than one occasion in the press (see "Notes and Queries," 1869-70), but there is little doubt that the picture

belonging to the Duke of Westminster is authentic. It has been also suggested that it is not a portrait of Buttall, but of a Molyneux, one of the Sefton family. Gainsborough exhibited a portrait of Lady Molyneux in 1770, and this may be a likeness of one of her two brothers, Viscount Petersham, aged sixteen, or Henry Fitzroy Stanhope. The boy has a very aristocratic bearing for an ironmonger's son.

Gainsborough's contributions to the Academy in 1779 consisted of portraits of the *Duchess of Gloucester,* Horace Walpole's niece; the *Duchess of Cumberland*; the *Duke of Argyll*; *Judge Perrin*; and a half-length of "Two Ladies." In 1780 his portraits included a remarkably fine one of *General Conway,* a commission from the States of Jersey of which he was Governor; the *Rev. William Stevens, D.D.,* chaplain to the Duke of Cumberland; the *Rev. Mr Gosset*; *Mr Crosdale*; *John Henderson,* studying a part; *Madame Le Brun,* a well-known singer, who, as Francesca Danzi, first appeared at the Italian Opera in London in 1777, and was Prima Donna there in the year Gainsborough painted this graceful portrait of her; *Mr George Coyte,* no doubt a member of the Sudbury and Ipswich

family already mentioned, and one of the friends of his youth, a picture so true to nature, and so vivid and noble a piece of portraiture that it was nicknamed "Coyte alive"; the very splendid likeness of *Mrs Beaufoy* (see page 131), the wife of Henry Beaufoy, M.P.; and one of the notorious *Rev. Henry Bate,* then editor of the "Morning Post," and afterwards made a Baronet, when he became Sir Henry Bate Dudley. This portrait is now in the National Gallery (see page 183). Gainsborough painted him a second time in 1785, full-length, out of doors, with a small dog, a very fine work, of which it was said by a political opponent that "the man wanted execution and the dog hanging." The corresponding full-length of his wife, a beautiful example, in which Gainsborough's fondness for blue is shown, is now in the collection of Lord Burton.

IX

In 1780 an event occurred which caused great trouble to both Gainsborough and his wife. Their younger daughter, Mary, had become secretly engaged to Johann Christian Fischer, the hautbois player, and when the news was finally broken to the father and mother they received it with grave displeasure. Fischer had been an intimate friend of the house ever since the Bath days. Gainsborough had a real admiration for his playing, and had painted his portrait more than once, notably the fine full-length which has been recently removed from Hampton Court to Windsor Castle. Fischer was a man of strange temper, and eccentric in manner and habits, and both parents had serious doubts as to the wisdom of the proposed union; but Gainsborough's easy-going nature obliged him to give way in the end. To save himself from the discomfort of causing immediate distress by a refusal, he allowed the

marriage to take place with all its grave possibilities of future unhappiness. He was not, in fact, strong-willed enough to withhold his consent at so late an hour, but he and the other members of his family were unhappy about it, as may be gathered from a letter which he wrote to his sister Mrs Gibbon, a day or two after the wedding.

Unfortunately their fears were too well founded. The marriage proved a failure almost from the first, and ended in a mutual separation not long afterwards. Mary Gainsborough is said to have been a great beauty, but decidedly eccentric, and, at times, quite out of her mind. One of her delusions was that the Prince of Wales was violently in love with her. She died about 1826, and bequeathed her husband's portrait to the King. The elder daughter, Margaret, who died unmarried a few years before Mrs Fischer, inherited her father's love of music and played finely on the harpsichord. She, too, was slightly tinged with that strain of eccentricity which marked more than one member of John Gainsborough's family.

During the next three years, the last in

ANNE LUTTRELL, DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND

(By permission of H.M. the King)

which he was to appear on the walls of the Royal Academy, Gainsborough exhibited some of his finest portraits. In 1781 he sent full-lengths of the *King* and *Queen,* and a portrait of *Bishop Hurd,* as well as *A Shepherd,* and some sea-pieces. In the following year he was in still greater force with portraits of *Madame Baccelli,* the well-known dancer; *Colonel Tarleton*; *Miss Dalrymple,* probably the notorious Mrs Elliott; *Colonel St Leger*; the *Prince of Wales,* and four others, as well as a landscape and the *Girl and Pigs.* This last picture, which attracted much admiration in the exhibition room, and was very highly praised by his fellow-artists, was purchased by Sir Joshua for one hundred guineas.

The portrait of *St Leger* (see page 39), recently removed from Hampton Court to Windsor, is a fine example of Gainsborough's art at this period, although the horse is not quite satisfactory. The scarlet coat is introduced with striking effect. "Handsome Jack Sellinger," as he was called, was a boon companion of the Prince of Wales, and each of them commissioned Gainsborough to paint the other's portrait as a gift. Dr Wolcot (Peter

Pindar), in the doggerel verse in which he criticised each annual exhibition, made great fun of these two portraits, and implored Gainsborough to stick to landscapes. It seems to have been the habit of the critics of those days to praise his landscapes without purchasing them—somewhat at the expense of his portrait painting.

In 1783, he exhibited a series of fifteen heads of the King, Queen, Prince of Wales, and other members of the reigning family, a really royal commission, which must have caused some envy among his brother Academicians. These heads are very slight in execution, each one probably finished at a single sitting, but many of them are brilliant in effect. Walpole considered the one of the Prince of Wales to be the best of the set. The one of Queen Charlotte was most sympathetically painted. It was said by a writer of the day that Gainsborough had the knack of "making even our old Queen Charlotte look picturesque." In addition to these heads he sent portraits of *Lord Cornwallis, Sir Charles Gould,* the *Duke of Northumberland, Lord Sandwich, Sir Harbord Harbord, Mr Ramus, Mrs*

Sheridan and the *Duchess of Devonshire.* The portrait of Mrs Sheridan (see page 121), one of the loveliest examples of Gainsborough's brush, is now in the possession of Lord Rothschild; the one of the Duchess of Devonshire is claimed to be the canvas recently acquired by Mr Pierpont Morgan, of which Viscount Clifden owns the small sketch, almost in monochrome, which may have been either a preliminary study for the picture or made for the engraver. In this exhibition was also included the *Two Shepherd's Boys with Fighting Dogs.*

Gainsborough paid a visit to the English Lakes in the autumn of 1783, in company with his old friend Mr Kilderbee of Ipswich. He writes from Kew Green to Mr William Pearce in the highest spirits about his coming holiday, and in the course of the letter remarks :—"I purpose to mount all the Lakes at the next Exhibition in the great style,—and you know if the people don't like them, 'tis only jumping into one of the deepest of them from off a wooded island and my reputation will be fixed for ever."

This journey to Cumberland was probably

THE HON. MRS GRAHAM
(National Gallery of Scotland)

suggested to Gainsborough by his acquaintanceship with De Loutherbourg. During the year 1782, when he was engaged as a scene painter at Drury Lane, De Loutherbourg opened to the public his exhibition of moving pictures, which he called the *Eidophusikon, or Representation of Nature.* At that period it was the general opinion that picturesque scenery was confined to the Continent, and the object of De Loutherbourg's exhibition was to show that there was no need for artists to go abroad in search of grand or beautiful scenery. "The stage by means of which it was produced was but little more than six feet wide, yet within this narrow space he contrived, by artful arrangements of coloured lights and movable elements of landscape" to produce impressions of startling reality. Gainsborough was enchanted with this exhibition, and visited it night after night. About the same time he also saw an exhibition of stained glass made by Thomas Jarvis, and artificially illuminated, representing effects of moonlight, firelight, frost, etc., which also greatly attracted him. Jarvis, who held his first exhibition in London in 1776, was the

maker of the window designed by Reynolds, and of the window after Raphael's cartoons, in New College, Oxford. As a result, Gainsborough invented a mechanical box or camera, consisting "of a number of glass panes, which were movable, and were painted by himself, representing various subjects, chiefly landscapes. They were lighted by candles at the back, and viewed through a magnifying lens, by which means the effect produced was truly captivating; the moonlight pieces, especially, exhibiting the most perfect resemblance to nature." This magic-lantern box is still in existence, and was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885. He made many designs for this clever toy to the great amusement of both himself and his friends. According to a writer in the "Somerset House Gazette," April 10th, 1824, Gainsborough was so possessed "with the magical richness of transparencies, that he occasionally made studies, and, lighting them from behind, from these emulated their splendour in his pictures. It is owing to this practice that some of his latest works are remarkable for violent contrasts, and wanting in that stillness

and harmony which characterised his earlier labours." Very likely the sentence in his letter to Mr Pearce quoted above, to the effect that he intended to mount all the Lakes in the great style, had some reference to the *Eidophusikon* and his own little invention.

X

In April 1784, Gainsborough's most serious quarrel with the Council of the Royal Academy took place, a quarrel which, unfortunately, ended in complete rupture. The dispute arose over a picture he had painted for the Prince of Wales, a portrait group of the Princess Royal with the Princesses Augusta and Elizabeth, which was intended to fill a particular space in one of the panelled walls of a room in Carlton Place. This canvas had been painted with a view to the position it was to occupy later on, and the artist was naturally anxious that it should be exhibited in the Royal Academy at the same height from the ground as that for which it had been executed, so that full justice might be done to a picture of exceptional importance as a royal commission. Gainsborough knew quite well that the Academy had a fixed rule as to the height at which full-length and three-quarters portraits were to be hung; but

he made a special request that they would waive this regulation for once, and he offered to accept inferior positions for his other contributions if they would do so. But the Council, who were, of course, well within their rights, were stupidly obdurate. They were determined that the rule should not be broken, even for the exhibition of a royal commission from the brush of one of the most celebrated of their members. Gainsborough, with his usual impetuosity, sent for all his contributions to be returned, and wrote the following letter:—

"Mr Gainsborough presents his compliments to the gentlemen appointed to hang the pictures at the Royal Academy, and begs leave to *hint* to them, that if the Royal Family, which he has sent for this exhibition (*being smaller than three-quarters*) are hung above the line with full lengths, he never more, whilst he breathes, will send another picture to the Exhibition. This he swears by God. Saturday morning."

His letter displays some unnecessary violence, but under the circumstances, when smarting from so sharp a rebuff, was excusable. He kept his word, and never exhibited in the Royal

THE HON. ANNE DUNCOMBE

(By permission of Lord Rothschild)

Academy again. Fulcher considers that his conduct in the matter "cannot be too strongly censured," for he knew how difficult the arranging of the pictures must be, and should have respected the laws of the institution to which he belonged. There is much to be said, however, on Gainsborough's side. He felt very strongly, as was only natural, that an exception might have been made under the peculiar circumstances of the case, more particularly as it is said that the rule had been broken on more than one occasion for the benefit of other painters.

In consequence of this bitter quarrel he made arrangements to exhibit his pictures in Schomberg House, but with only small success. Shortly afterwards he paid a flying visit to Sudbury, for the purpose, among other things, of recording his vote as a free burgess of the town. His old Suffolk friends, as was only natural, made much of him as a celebrity, and were greatly impressed with the grandeur of his apparel, his good looks, and the gaiety of his manner. Here, no doubt, he recovered his temper which had been so severely ruffled.

Among the pictures which were not publicly

exhibited owing to the action of the Academy, was the splendid portrait of *Mrs Siddons,* in the National Gallery (see page 43), which is so well-known that it needs no detailed description. It is, undoubtedly, one of his masterpieces, and was painted with more decision and care in the drawing than was usual with him at this period. Her blue and buff striped silk dress, "the mixture of the two colours where the folds throw them in a mass, resembling dark sea water with the sunshine on it," as Fulcher poetically puts it, is a piece of painting of rare quality, while as a study of character the portrait would be hard to beat. Fanny Kemble said of it, "A more exquisitely graceful, refined and harmonious picture I have never seen; the delicacy and sweetness, combined with the warmth and richness of the colouring, make it a very peculiar picture." Gainsborough found the severity of her classical features a little difficult. After more than one preliminary attempt, he is said to have exclaimed in his impatient, witty way, "Damn your nose, Madam, there's no end to it!"

During the last few years of his life he spent a part of every summer at Richmond, where

he continued to practise landscape with all his old devotion, and also painted a number of those "rustic scenes" such as *The Mushroom Girl*, and *The Woodman in a Storm*, which were, perhaps, more popular than his portraits with the connoisseurs of the day. He was regarded with affection throughout the district, both for his sympathetic manners, and for the generosity with which he treated those country folk who posed as his models. It was here that he discovered little Jack Hill, a handsome lad and a wild one. With his usual impulsiveness he offered to take the boy off his parents' hands, and make proper provision for him in the future. They accepted gladly, but Jack was not of their way of thinking; and, preferring the country to life in town, he soon ran away. He was taken back, and forgiven, but soon made a second escape. He appears in a number of Gainsborough's pictures.

That Gainsborough retained his full powers until the last is proved by such a picture as *The Mall, St James's Park* (see page 47), painted in 1786. This is a superb *tour de force* of painting. The picture represents the fashionable promenade under the trees, with groups

MRS RICHARD SHERIDAN
(*By permission of Lord Rothschild*)

of small figures, the central one consisting of several of the Royal Princesses. Northcote's description of it, as given by Hazlitt, has been constantly quoted, but is too good to be omitted here. "You would suppose," he says, "it would be stiff and formal with the straight rows of trees and people sitting on benches—it is all in motion, and in a flutter like a lady's fan. Watteau is not half so airy." This description, however, was originally Walpole's and, no doubt, Hazlitt's memory failed him when he gave it to Northcote in his "Conversations." It does, indeed, recall Watteau in his most graceful mood more than any other picture from Gainsborough's brush. There is an elegance about the composition, a delicacy in the colouring, and a freedom, lacking nothing of truth, in the handling, which combine to make it one of the masterpieces of English art.

In the following year, 1787, he painted *The Woodman in a Storm*, which proved a great and a popular success with all who saw it. It was still, however, in the artist's possession at his death, in spite of the admiration which the King expressed for it. Unfortunately it is

now known only from the engraving by Simon, as it was destroyed in a fire at Exton Park, the seat of Lord Gainsborough, who had purchased it for five hundred guineas at the sale of the artist's remaining pictures in 1788, a considerable price in those days.

It was when attending the trial of Warren Hastings in Westminster Hall, in February, 1788, that Gainsborough caught the chill which is supposed to have brought about his fatal illness. He complained of pains in the neck almost immediately afterwards. Dr Heberden and the celebrated surgeon, John Hunter, were called in, and at first they considered it to be nothing but a swelling of the glands which would disappear with the warmer weather. On their advice, Gainsborough went to his cottage on Kew Green for change of air and rest, but growing rapidly worse, he returned to London. His doctors now decided that it must be cancer, and Mr Pott and Dr Warren, who were also called in, confirmed this opinion.

They found, however, that nothing could be done to stop the growth of the disease, and he finally fell a victim to it on August

the 2nd, dying in a back room on the second floor of Schomberg House. A post-mortem examination was held, but the results of it are not known.

Towards the last days of July, knowing that the end was drawing near, Gainsborough wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds, asking him to come and see him. He felt, perhaps, that in his conduct in the past he had been but scantily courteous to the President, more particularly with regard to the unfinished portrait for which Reynolds had sat at Gainsborough's express request, in November, 1782. Sir Joshua fell ill a day or two after the first sitting, and was obliged to go to Bath for change of air. On his return he sent word to say that he was in town again, but Gainsborough merely sent a formal acknowledgment that he was glad to learn that Sir Joshua had recovered his health, and took no further steps to complete the portrait. On his death-bed he saw that such behaviour was unpardonable, and strove to make amends. The short note he penned with evident difficulty is pathetic in its halting expression, so changed from the energy of his earlier

THE MISSES LINLEY

(Mrs Sheridan and Mrs Tickell)

(By permission of the Governors of Dulwich College)

style of letterwriting, and gives signs that the disease was gradually affecting his brain. It runs as follows:—

"Dear Sir Joshua,—I am just to write what I fear you will not read, after lying in a dying state for six months, the extreme affection which I am informed by a friend which Sir Joshua has expressed induces me to beg a last favour which is to come over under my Roof, and look at my things. My Woodman you never saw. What I ask now is not disagreeable to your feeling, that I may have the honour to speak to you. I can from a sincere Heart say that I always admired and sincerely loved Sir Joshua Reynolds.

"Tho. Gainsborough."

It is said that Gainsborough had a number of his favourite landscapes brought into the bedroom in readiness for Sir Joshua's visit, and discussed them with him; and that when the President bade him a sad adieu, the dying man murmured, "We are all going to Heaven —and Van Dyck is of the company." At the beginning of his fourteenth Discourse to the Academy students, which Reynolds delivered

in the following December, a discourse devoted to Gainsborough and his art, he prefaced his remarks with an account of this last visit. "If any little jealousies had subsisted between us," he said, "they were forgotten, in those moments of sincerity; and he turned towards me as one who was engrossed by the same pursuits, and who deserved his good opinion, by being sensible of his excellence." This last scene in the death chamber of the great artist is one of the most touching in the annals of English painting.

His expressed desire that he might be buried as quietly as possible in Kew Churchyard by the side of his friend Kirby, with a plain stone inscribed with his bare name, was carried out by his family. The funeral took place on the 9th of August, and among the mourners were Sheridan, John Hunter, Linley, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir William Chambers, Benjamin West, Paul Sandby, Coates,[1] and Bartolozzi, the six last being the pall-bearers. Gains-

[1] The name is spelt in this way in "The Gentleman's Magazine," 1788. It was probably Samuel Cotes, the miniaturist, younger brother of Francis Cotes, R.A.

borough Dupont was the chief mourner. His gravestone is simply inscribed:—"Thomas Gainsborough Esq., died August 2nd, 1788, aged 61." His widow, who lived for ten years longer, was buried in the same grave. He left a very modest fortune. His wife was executrix, and Mr Kilderbee, of Ipswich, trustee or "overseer." Gainsborough Dupont received a certain sum on the understanding that he made no claim for services in finishing the incomplete commissions which remained in the studio, and everything else—little enough for comfort—was left to the widow and unmarried daughter.

XI

Gainsborough possessed the artistic temperament to his very finger tips. He had little of the even temper which was so striking a feature in the character of Sir Joshua Reynolds. A number of tales that are told of him bear witness to this; such, for instance, as the one about a certain nobleman, with more wealth than breeding, who was sitting for his full-length portrait. The painter overheard him asking at the door whether "that fellow Gainsborough" had finished his likeness. Furious at the slight, the artist dashed a brush of paint across the face on the canvas, in presence of his client, exclaiming, "Where is that fellow now?" and thereby losing one hundred guineas. Many artists would have pocketed both the affront and the money. On another occasion, when some pompous person, an alderman according to tradition, implored him not to forget the dimple in his chin—"Oh, damn your

dimple!" cried Gainsborough in exasperation, "I will paint neither it nor you." He had, in fact, little capacity for concealing irritation and never suffered fools gladly. In his relationship with the Royal Academy he did not show to advantage. Accepting all the advantages which membership of that body gave, he made little or no effort in return, and seems to have been always ready to pick a quarrel with its Council. His conduct towards Sir Joshua, with regard to the painting of the President's portrait, is certainly open to censure. The rudeness appears almost to have been intentional, and was in any case inexcusable. No doubt he found that the lack of sympathy between them stood in the way of his producing as fine a portrait as the position of the two painters demanded; and, rather than make a failure, and feeling that he could not explain the reason, he allowed Reynolds' intimation that he was ready for a second sitting to pass unheeded.

One of his leading characteristics was an impulsive generosity which he carried to excess. Though he made a large amount of money by his painting, and, as he told

MRS BEAUFOY

(*By permission of Alfred de Rothschild, Esq.*)

his sister, lived in London at the rate of a thousand a year, at his death he left his family with very inadequate means. It is to his praise that he gave constant assistance to a number of his relations; but any tale of distress would bring tears of pity from his eyes and money from his pockets. He treated his models, and all the country people whom he sketched and drew, with a most liberal hand. He was even more generous with his pictures than his money, and often used to carry this foible to absurd lengths, giving away a valuable work for so slight a favour as a couple of airs on a fiddle, or in return for a few free admissions to a theatre. He frequently painted the likeness of an intimate friend as a gift. His drawings he showered upon acquaintances, even giving them away to ensure silence while music was going on. Abel's rooms were filled with such trophies, pinned to the walls. These Abel presented to his mistress, Signora Grassi. She called her house a "painted Paradise" because of the Gainsboroughs hanging there; but Fischer, with his blunt rudeness, said, "Abel, you are a fool; and

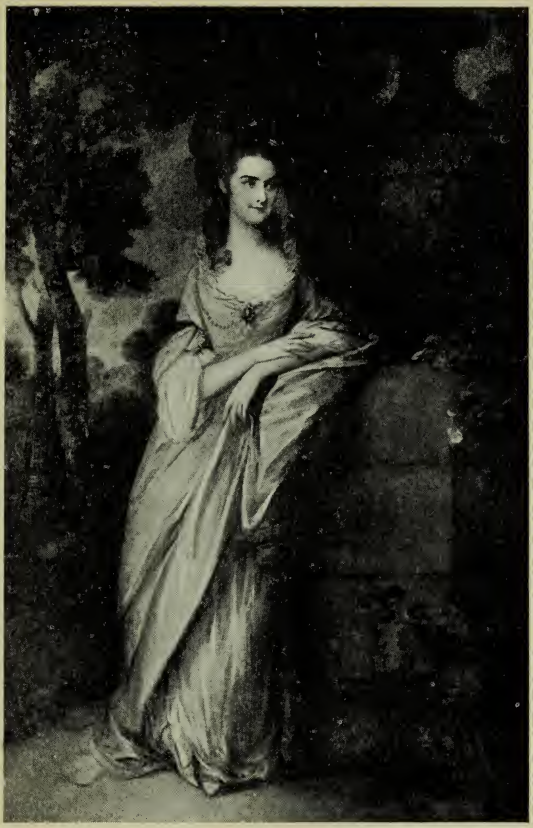
mine fader Gainsborough is a plockhead; for the only painted thing in the house is mine lady's cat-face." This lady is said to have pasted some of the artist's finest drawings upon her dressing-room walls; but this can hardly be true, as, after Abel's death, she sold them at Langford's rooms.

Outside his art, his one great passion was music. Whenever he heard a new performer he was at once fired with a desire to master the particular instrument upon which he played. In his Suffolk days he belonged to a musical club, and learnt to play on Thicknesse's violin. Later on, Abel taught him the viol-di-gamba, and Fischer the hautbois. In 1774, Giardini, the violinist, bought for and sent to him at Bath one of Broadwood's harpsichords. William Jackson, who declared that "there were times when music seemed to be Gainsborough's employment, and painting his diversion," has left an amusing record of the artist's devotion to the sister art.

"When I first knew Gainsborough," he writes, "he lived at Bath, where Giardini had been exhibiting his then unrivalled

powers on the violin. His excellent performance made the painter enamoured of that instrument; and he was not satisfied until he possessed it. He next heard Abel on the viol-di-gamba. The violin was hung on the willow—Abel's viol-di-gamba was purchased, and the house resounded with melodious thirds and fifths. My friend's passion had now a fresh object—Fischer's hautboy, but I do not recollect that he deprived Fischer of his instrument; and though he procured a hautboy, I never heard him make the least attempt on it. Probably his ear was too delicate to bear the disagreeable sounds which necessarily attend the first beginnings on a wind instrument. The next time I saw Gainsborough it was in the character of King David. He had heard a harper at Bath—the performer was soon left harpless—and now Fischer, Abel and Giardini were all forgotten—there was nothing like chords and arpeggios!"

As an artist he was naturally interested in the scenery and surroundings of the drama, as can be gathered from the following letter to Garrick, written in 1772, when the great



MRS MEARS

(*By permission of Alfrea ae Rothschild, Esq.*)

actor was beginning to overburden his productions with costly scenery and effects :—

Sunday Morning.

"My Dear Sir,—When the streets are paved with Brilliants, and the skies made of Rainbows, I suppose you'll be contented and satisfied with red, blue and yellow. It appears to me that Fashion, let it consist of false or true taste, will have its run like a runaway horse; for when eyes and ears are thoroughly debauched by glare and noise, the returning to modest truth will seem very gloomy for a time; and I know you are cursedly puzzled how to make this retreat, without putting out your lights and losing the advantage of all our new discoveries of transparent painting—etc. etc.,—how to satisfy your tawdry friends while you steal back into the mild evening gleam and quiet middle term. I'll tell you, my sprightly genius, how this is to be done. Maintain all your lights, but spare the poor abused colours till the eye rests and recovers. Keep up your music by supplying the place of *Noise* by more sound, more harmony, and more tune, and split that cursed Fife and Drum. Whatever so great

a genius as Mr Garrick may say or do to support our false taste, he must feel the truth of what I am now saying, that neither our Plays, Paintings or Music are any longer real works of invention, but the abuse of Nature's lights and what has been already invented in former times. Adieu, my dear Friend. Any commands to Bath? T. G.

"A word to the wise; if you let your Portrait hang up so high only to consult your Room it never can look without a hardness of countenance and the painting flat; it was calculated for breast high, and will never have its effect or likeness otherwise."

Gainsborough's chief reason for writing this letter lies, perhaps, in the postscript. His portraits were always painted to fill a particular position, and their full beauty was marred if otherwise placed; and he had to remonstrate on more than one occasion with sitters who were indifferent to this.

He was not an educated man in the same sense as Reynolds. He received but scanty schooling, and had but little book knowledge. The only book he cared to read, as he said

himself, was the book of Nature. In this way the qualities of his mind were less exercised than those of his heart and his emotions. Although he painted many of the foremost men of letters and of affairs of his day, he rarely became intimate with them as Sir Joshua did. Their company was, as a rule, a little fatiguing to him. He preferred the companionship of men of his own mental calibre or a little below it, such as the musicians and actors whose likenesses he rendered with such admirable power and insight. In their society he was at his best. He shone in conversation and his talk was both witty and free, at a time when coarseness of speech was a fashion. He was a shrewd observer, however, and on occasion could talk with authority on his art, as can be gathered from more than one of his letters, of which but few have been preserved.

He was a man of an affectionate, loveable disposition, occasionally giving way to hot bursts of temper, often resulting from quite an inadequate cause, but soon recovering himself, and then only anxious to be the first to make amends. In his home life he seems to

MRS LOWNDES-STONE

(*By permission of Alfred de Rothschild, Esq.*)

have been an excellent husband and father. It is told of him that he liked nothing better than to remain at home in the evenings, by the side of his wife, devoting himself to further practice in his art, by making studies of landscape composition, and experiments in colour effects by artificial lights, the best of which he would keep for future use, and tear up the remainder. Contemporary references to him are few, but scanty as they are they show that he was of a lively, cheerful nature, if occasionally capricious, and always a favourite in all ranks of society. He says of himself, in a letter to Jackson, "I am the most inconsistent, changeable being, so full of fits and starts, that if you mind what I say, it will be shutting your eyes to some purpose." Some writers have insinuated that he was in the habit of straying from the direct paths of virtue, but there is no real proof of this. In writing to intimate friends both his ideas and his language were often extremely coarse, but beyond that there is little that can be pointed at to his discredit.

XII

As a landscape painter Gainsborough was highly esteemed during his lifetime, but there is little doubt that if, like Richard Wilson, he had given himself up entirely to this branch of art, he would have made intimate acquaintanceship with poverty. A taste for the acquisition of such pictures was only just beginning to arise in England, and though men like Horace Walpole praised them in no mean terms, they very seldom purchased them. We find him regretting that he cannot lend one of them to Ozias Humphrey to copy for the reason that it made the sale of the original still more difficult. The hall and passages of his house were hung with rows of them, in front of which his fashionable sitters seldom stopped even to admire, and still less seldom to buy. Shortly before his death he showed them to Lord Lansdowne, saying, "People won't buy 'em, you know. I'm a

landscape painter, and yet they will come to me for portraits. Look at that damned arm! I have been at it all the morning, and I can't get it right."

It was for landscape painting that he himself expressed the greatest preference. He began his career as an artist by the constant and careful study of natural scenery, which is in itself a sufficient answer to Hazlitt's astonishing assertion that he "devoted himself to the art (of landscape) with a view to soothe and amuse his mind, with the ease of a gentleman, not with the severity of a professional artist." He painted landscape because he loved it, whereas he not infrequently found it irksome to paint certain of his sitters, with whom he felt out of touch. There was little of the "ease of a gentleman" in the way in which he spent every available hour of his youth and early manhood in the faithful delineation of every tree and bush round Sudbury, or the lanes and fields near Ipswich.

It is interesting to note how the qualities of his art appealed to his contemporaries. The critic of "The Gentleman's Magazine" wrote that "Portraits were not his forte. His fame

LADY SHEFFIELD

(*By permission of Miss de Rothschild*)

rests upon better ground, upon an almost unparalleled extent of talent in landscapes, animals, and rustic figures. In his landscapes he has at different times assumed the manner of many different artists, and while he adhered to them equalled them all; and in some of his later pictures so far united these different styles as to form one grand whole, peculiarly his own, and peculiarly excellent. The first master he studied was Wynants, whose thistles and dock leaves he has frequently introduced into his early pictures. The next was Ruysdael; but his colouring is less sombre, though the pencilling of the Englishman was less accurate than that of the Fleming. He has sometimes very happily seized upon the best manner of Teniers. In a view of company in St James's Park he assumed the manner of Watteau, and produced a picture in many respects superior to any Watteau ever painted."

Fine examples of his earlier style are to be found in the National Gallery, in such pictures as the *Cornard Wood* and several others. Another interesting landscape of this period is in the possession of Mr R. W. Hudson. Sir Walter Armstrong, who illustrates it in his book,

dates it about 1748-54. It is painted throughout with the greatest care, and the colour is subdued but rich. In these earlier works Gainsborough restricted his palette to quiet and even sombre tones; his delight in colour came later.

Soon after his arrival in Bath he began to throw off the influence of the Low Country painters who made the microscopic rendering of foliage one of the chief aims of their painting His handling became looser, and his drawing less searching in its minuteness, while his colour increased in power and beauty every year. His commissions for portraits now became so numerous that he had but little time in which to study landscape in the surrounding country. He began to rely more and more upon his memory, so that the earlier years spent in hard work out of doors became invaluable to him. To paint a picture such as the *Cornard Wood* meant weeks and weeks of work in front of the scene itself. Such a method of work was now impossible to him. His expeditions afield grew shorter and less frequent, so that rapidity of execution was a necessity. The essential features of the

scene became the object after which he strove, while the details of which these were built up were less regarded. He began to work more and more on such pictures in the studio, with the aid of the sketches and hasty studies which he made whenever he could get an opportunity. "From the fields," says Sir Joshua, "he brought into his painting-room stumps of trees, weeds, and animals of various sorts; and designed them not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table, composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water. How far this latter practice may be useful in giving hints, the professors of landscape can best determine. Like every other technical practice, it seems to me wholly to depend on the general talent of him who uses it. Such methods may be nothing better than contemptible and mischievous trifling; or they may be aids. I think, upon the whole, unless we constantly refer to real nature, that practice may be more likely to do harm than good."

In spite of the rapidly increasing number

GRACE DALRYMPLE (MRS ELLIOT)

(By permission of the Duke of Portland)

Photograph by Messrs Henry Dixon & Son

of great people who flocked to his rooms in the Circus, he managed, however, to get away from Bath from time to time. He was a guest at a number of houses in different parts of the country for the purpose of painting family portraits, and while there he generally managed to find opportunity to paint a picture of some rural scene in the near neighbourhood; but he was no longer able to spend whole days at a stretch in direct and solitary communion with nature. As he grew in artistic strength he saw nature more and more as one harmonious whole, and the hidden depths of poetry, which she conceals from all but her most earnest students, became more and more an open book to him, so that his canvases became filled with beauty. A tender, brooding melancholy pervades many of them like a strain of music. Complaint has often been made of the "emptiness" of his later landscapes, and the "sketchiness" of his style, and there is no doubt that his habit of generalising, so that, for instance, it is impossible to name the species of tree represented in his pictures, was carried at times to too great an excess. Yet by this hasty, sketchy

manner of handling he was able to express just those qualities in a landscape which most appealed to him. He seized upon that indefinite charm which so many have failed to capture, and set it on canvas, with a feeling for its beauty, and a truly harmonious felicity both in colour and composition, which have rarely been equalled. His luminous skies and distances, his sunny, tender colour and the gracefulness of his design in rendering such elements of a landscape as trees and foliage, are often of the highest quality. This insight into nature, which he owed to his poet's eye, and to his loving study of her, was often expressed in paint, by very simple methods. In such a picture as the *Landscape* illustrated on page 51, belonging to Mr R. W. Hudson —a simple subject—very poetically set forth the sentiment of a calm peaceful evening, when the whole scene is flooded with golden light, has been produced by no elaboration of the different parts.

Sir Walter Armstrong, as already noted, traces in Gainsborough's earliest efforts in landscape the influence of Richard Wilson ; but if there was any such influence, which is doubt-

ful, it was of the slightest. He sees it in such a picture as the early landscape belonging to Mr Cobbold, figured in his book, but the built-up composition of this work seems sufficiently accounted for by the Dutchmen. Wilson was, no doubt, the first English painter to cast himself free from the influence of Low Country art, and to "Italianise" his landscape, and though many of the best qualities of his work were essentially English, and his feeling for the beauty of nature as seen in his own country was deep and intense, yet much of his work calls to mind the "classicism" of Poussin, Claude, or Salvator Rosa. Gainsborough, on the other hand, though his study of the old masters—a habit he followed all his life—is easily traced in his landscapes, was thoroughly English and himself. Little of this classicism can be pointed to in his canvases, and the "niggling" of the Dutchmen was merely a temporary phase of his development. The representation of foliage by innumerable little dabs of paint, a convention which was carried further by these men than by those of any other school of painting, soon ceased to satisfy the Englishman.

MRS ROBINSON—"PERDITA"
(WALLACE COLLECTION)

Certain of the Flemings, however, had an ampler, broader convention in their treatment of foliage, and when Gainsborough encountered the work of Rubens, with its freer style of design, he soon threw off the more laborious methods by which he had at first endeavoured to reproduce nature. The slighter execution of the great Flemish master, and his carelessness of small truths, and the absence of all mere mechanical detail in his pictures, was a lesson which Gainsborough did not fail to learn, and to gradually adapt to his own use without any conscious imitation. In handling he thus may remind us of others, but in the spirit of his work, in his point of view, he was essentially English, and may be claimed as the first of the band of illustrious men, who, since his day, have continued to paint the natural scenery of these islands with a truth, and insight, and a loving fidelity, which have stamped their school with an originality, a freshness, and a charm, such as no other country has, perhaps, equalled.

He was, as Ruskin declared, a "magnificent sketcher." Mr Frederick Wedmore well puts it when he says:—"Gainsborough was above all things, in his best time, a sketcher, an

indicator, a suggestive poet, who, using his own imagination freely, never dispensed with yours. In the landscape about him, he conceived a picture; he conveyed his conception; he did not finally realise it. Even his earliest works have somewhere, in sea or sky, something of abstraction and generalisation, and as the time proceeded, and mind and method matured, the abstraction was more marked, the generalisation wider, but both of course were more serenely ordered, were less faulty, less partial and accidental." "Gainsborough's art," he goes on to say, "was abstract and generalising beyond the measure of much that is the greatest, and he had therefore the essential drawbacks of his tentative, reticent method."

Constable, like his predecessor a man of Suffolk, who spent his life in painting the scenery which Gainsborough loved to depict, has described in simple, sincere words the effect which the latter's landscapes produced upon a brother-artist. "The landscape of Gainsborough," he says, "is soothing, tender, and affecting. The stillness of noon, the depths of twilight, and the dews and pearls of the morning, are all to be found in the canvases

of this most benevolent and kind-hearted man. On looking at them, we find tears in our eyes, and know not what brings them. The lonely haunts of the solitary shepherd—the return of the rustic with his bill and bundle of wood,—the darksome lane or dell,—the sweet little cottage girl at the spring with her pitcher,—were the things he delighted to paint, and which he painted with exquisite refinement, yet not a refinement beyond nature. Gainsborough has been compared with Murillo by those who cannot distinguish between the subject and the art. Like Murillo he painted the peasantry of his country, but here the resemblance ceases. His taste was in all respects greatly superior to that of the Spanish painter."

Ruskin's opinion of him has been quoted often enough, but is well worth the attention of those who are only learning to appreciate the art of "deep-thoughted, solemn Gainsborough," as he calls him. "His power of colour," he says, "is capable of taking rank beside that of Rubens; he is the purest colourist—Sir Joshua himself not excepted—of the whole English school; with him, in fact,

LADY MULGRAVE. (In America)

the *art* of painting did in great part die, and exists not now in Europe." "In management and quality of single and particular tint, in the purely technical part of painting, Turner is a child to Gainsborough. His hand is as light as the sweep of a cloud—as swift as the flash of the sunbeam. His masses are as broad as the first division in Heaven of light from darkness. His forms are grand, simple and ideal. He never loses sight of his picture as a whole. In a word, Gainsborough is an immortal painter. His excellence is based on principles of art long acknowledged, and facts of nature universally apparent."

After a number of years of close study of those "affectionate details" of nature which counted for so much in Ruskin's theory of fine art, he gradually developed a freedom in manipulation which in the end was undoubtedly "mannered and hasty," and resulted in that sketchiness of treatment and emptiness of composition to which exception has been taken so often. He did this however, of set purpose, in his desire to give, in all its freshness, the vivid impression which the scene made upon his brain; and to gain this end he

sacrificed all details. In this way he obtained a unity which is lacking in his earlier pictures. His landscapes may be abstractions, mere conventions of natural scenery; but they are noble conventions, based upon a solid foundation of truth. As the expression of a particular mood of the painter when brought into contact with some aspect of nature which fires his imagination, and touches his deepest sense of beauty, Gainsborough's abstracts of English landscape are invaluable. He was the first—for Richard Wilson never quite rid himself of the influence of his Italian contemporaries—to devote himself to the painting of English scenery, unaffected by any traditions of the "old masters," and impelled by the sole desire of rendering truth and beauty to the best of his powers; and in certain directions, such as the richness and beauty of his colour and the silvery or golden tones of his atmosphere, as well as in the gracefulness of his delineation of masses of foliage, Gainsborough still remains one of the foremost, even when his work is compared with that of the many brilliant men who have followed in his footsteps.

XIII

In his combination of landscape with figure subjects—"rustic" or "rural scenes" as they are usually called—Gainsborough was deservedly popular during his lifetime, and this side of his art still appeals more strongly to many than his portraiture or landscape pure and simple. Beginning with small and insignificant figures, such as he found in the pictures of Flemish and Dutch painters, he gradually devoted more and more attention to them until towards the end of his life the figures themselves became life-sized and formed the chief motive of the painting, while the landscape became merely the back-ground, and was generalised to almost the same extent as in his portraits. His miniature painting of figures, as seen in such pictures as *The Cottage Door, The Harvest Waggon,* or Mr Pfungst's *Landscape* (see page 59), is characterised by all the qualities which are to be seen in his work on a larger scale. They have all the charm and graceful-

LADY MENDIP

(By permission of the Earl of Normanton)

Photograph kindly lent by Messrs H. Virtue & Co.

ness which mark his portraits. He possessed, indeed, the power of working in little to a much finer and greater degree than would be expected after a study confined to his touch and manner of handling in life-sized portraiture. There is great beauty in the grouping and drawing of the figures round the doorway in the Duke of Westminster's picture (see page 63), though they possess a distinction and grace, very charming in itself, which is frankly idealistic. He refined upon such beauty as he found in the country lads and lasses he painted, in much the same way as Frederick Walker. Indeed, the tiny group of the two lovers in Mr Pfungst's picture, in some ways suggests the work of the later artist.

This careful selection of all that was graceful and picturesque in his models, and the ignoring of the meaner and rougher qualities, is the predominant note of those larger studies of rural life which Gainsborough delighted to paint, such as the group of three bare-legged children in the National Gallery, No. 311. There is none of the meanness and vulgarity of form which Sir Joshua professed to find in them when addressing the Royal Academy

students. It is the picturesqueness of their ragged costume that he seizes upon, and not its dirt and squalor. One of his most famous "fancy subject" pictures was *The Woodman in the Storm*, already mentioned. A work of equal excellence was *The Shepherd's Boy in a Shower*, which Hazlitt said was "like a vision breathed on the canvas." Some of these pictures are full of humour, such as the one of boys racing on donkeys, known as *The Race*, and the *Boys with Fighting Dogs*. Very charming, too, are those which contain a portrait of little Jack Hill, as in the interior scene by firelight, engraved by Charles Turner, in which the handsome, bare-footed lad is warming his hands at the blaze, while his little sister, seated on the floor, is eating her supper from a bowl. Among the life-size studies of this class, the half-length of *Two Beggar Boys*, belonging to the Duke of Newcastle, one boy carrying a pitcher, and the other, evidently Jack Hill, looking up, with a landscape background,—is a characteristic example of Gainsborough's method in such cases. It is too "pretty" to be quite natural, and in other ways is a frank admission of the artist's admiration for Murillo. Occasionally

his young models were the children of well-to-do people clad in rustic dress. Such is the case in *The Cottage Girl,* belonging to Mr A. F. Basset, one of the most beautiful works of this nature both in colour and expression that Gainsborough ever accomplished. It is a full-length picture, and the little girl, barefooted, in her dark green tattered dress and pinafore, who carries a pitcher in one hand and holds a little fluffy puppy in the other, has a very wistful and sweet expression. The landscape background is simple enough, with its trees and hilly slopes, and masses of purple clouds in the sky. The tone of the whole work is extremely beautiful, and the sober greens and browns of the colour scheme most harmonious. Leslie in his "Handbook for Young Painters" says that this picture is "unequalled by anything of the kind in the world."

Gainsborough took an evident delight in introducing animals into his pictures, more particularly dogs. In very many of his portraits, he has introduced a dog with great effect. A study of a Pomeranian and its puppy, belonging to Abel, used to hang over Gainsborough's fireplace, and he has painted the same dog with

QUEEN CHARLOTTE, ABOUT 1783
(VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM)

great truth and beauty in the portraits of *Abel, Mrs Robinson* (Wallace Collection), *Squire Hallett and his Wife*, and many others. Three sporting dogs are introduced into the full-length portrait of the *Earl of Leicester*, who stands in a landscape with his gun, and game at his feet. Gainsborough is said to have had a great admiration for the animal-painting of Snyders, whose influence can be traced in such a picture as the *Fighting Dogs*; indeed, in his amusing doggerel, "Peter Pindar" accused the painter of stealing these two particular animals from the Fleming. Horses and cattle, too, he always used most effectively in his landscapes. Nothing could be better in its way than his study of an old white horse, probably Wiltshire's present to him, now in the National Gallery, No. 1484. On the other hand, in the few equestrian portraits he undertook, the horse, when rendered on so large a scale, becomes a little wooden in appearance, while its anatomy is not always free from error; but his painting of animals displays, on the whole, far higher qualities than were possessed by any one of his contemporaries.

The ease and rapidity of Gainsborough's handling is very apparent in his drawings and

sketches both of landscape and figures. He produced many hundreds of these during his career, ranging from the hastiest memoranda of clouds and other natural effects down to drawings which only lack colour to place them on an equality with his paintings. Several of these beautiful landscape studies, belonging to Mr H. Horne, Mr J. P. Heseltine, and others, have been admirably reproduced in Sir Walter Armstrong's book. Jackson, the painter, said that he had seen at least a thousand of these sketches, "not one of which but possesses merit, and some in a transcendent degree." He executed them in a variety of mediums, oil and water colours, in different kinds of chalk, pencil, sepia, bistre, and Indian ink. Some of his black and white studies were produced by the aid of a piece of stick with a sponge on the end, with which he put in the shadows, and a lump of whiting, held in the sugar-tongs, for the high lights. These drawings he gave away right and left to anyone who asked for them.

Among the four landscape drawings from Mr Fairfax Murray's collection, illustrated here, one (see page 67), is an admirable example of the pencil work of his early days.

It represents a pool under a high bank by the roadside, with farm sheds in the distance. In the field on the right, at the top of the bank, two men are ploughing. A gnarled trunk of a dead tree stretches over the water, and this has been drawn with all the careful realism that marked his nature-studies made round about Sudbury. There is little indication here of that freedom of handling which was, later on, to become one of the great distinguishing features of his art. The others are later in date; one, in black chalk (see page 71), represents a rough road crossing a hilly rise, down which a man is leading a waggon drawn by a white horse, with trees on either side, and indications of mountains in the background. In the third (see page 75), a party of people on foot and horseback is about to ford a narrow river, which in the distance is spanned by a high arched bridge. Here again two groups of trees on either side and a line of high hills on the horizon form the chief features of the landscape. The figures, roughly drawn, are well placed, and the foliage rendered with all his characteristic "sketchiness," the whole making an excel-

MISS HAVERFIELD (WALLACE COLLECTION)
(*Photograph by Messrs W. A. Mansell & Co.*)

lent little composition. It is a sketch in black and white chalk for a picture recently in the collection of the Earl of Dudley. The fourth, *The Watering Place* (see page 79), even more hasty in execution, is a pen and ink drawing heightened with white and varnished. A man is watering two horses, on one of which he is mounted, at a pool below a rocky cliff, from the face of which trees are growing. This drawing must have occupied the artist but a moment or two, but during that time he has admirably indicated the salient features of a true picture. It is a sketch for the picture belonging to Sir Charles Tennant of which there is a replica at South Kensington. The first of the studies from life (see page 81), from Mr Murray's collection, is in pencil, and represents a young artist, probably Gainsborough himself, seated on a bank sketching from nature by the aid of a circular mirror which he holds in his left hand. The wooded background is only vaguely indicated. This drawing is almost exactly similar to one in the British Museum, which Sir Walter Armstrong has reproduced in his *Portfolio* monograph. The second (page 85),

is a study in black and white chalk on grey paper, perhaps made in Ipswich, or in the earlier Bath years, of an old gentleman, leaning on a parapet, in a bushy wig, wearing a long coat, and carrying sword and stick, with gloves in his left hand. Of the two studies of ladies belonging to Mr Murray, one (see page 89), in black and white chalk, and formerly in the Robinson Collection, represents a seated figure, with head supported by her hand, the elbow resting upon a pedestal in some garden; while the other (see page 93) is standing. Both are probably hasty preliminary studies for portraits. The latter, in particular, has a gracefulness both in pose and in handling which reminds one of Watteau, and suggests that Gainsborough learned something of value from Gravelot. This drawing was lithographed by Lane, who gave it to Constable, and there is a note to that effect on the back of it in that artist's handwriting. The beautiful drawing of a lady in a straw hat, in the British Museum (see page 97), is another example of the elegance which marked in so eminent a degree so much of Gainsborough's finest portraiture, however rapidly executed.

XIV

It was in portraiture that Gainsborough's art reached its highest manifestation. In this field he stood upon an equality with Reynolds. Sir Joshua had a wider range of subject and method than Gainsborough, and a higher level of excellence when the whole body of his work is considered. Gainsborough was more unequal. He was, indeed, one of the most unequal of artists. In his happier moments of inspiration he was unsurpassable, but he too often fell below this level, and when sitters came with whom he could not feel himself in sympathy, or those who irritated him by their vanity or dulness, he failed to do justice to himself, and the portrait was painted with careless indifference. Writing to Jackson, he says of his pictures in one of the exhibitions:—"Never was such slight dabs presented to the eyes of a million. But I grow dauntless out of mere stupidity as I grow old." He needed

MRS JOHN TAYLOR

(By permission of George W. Taylor, Esq.)

a stimulus before he could accomplish his finest; but when once his imagination had been fired, his insight was penetrating, and his hand swift, certain, and unerring. On such occasions the grace, spirit, and lightness of touch which characterised his art made it unrivalled.

Taking his work as a whole, then, it shows greater unevenness than that of Reynolds, whose art is more masculine and energetic, and of a higher mental capacity. In contrast to this there is an almost feminine charm in Gainsborough at his best. He had little ambition to give more than the vivid impression of the moment. At such times the happy ease of his execution is extraordinary. In spite of the so-called "sketchiness" and "scratchiness" of his handling, as seen in his work during the latter years of his life, the power and brilliancy of his manipulation was not equalled by one of his contemporaries. Even when his drawing is faulty, and the details and backgrounds of his portraits slovenly almost to extreme, there is still a beautiful tonality, a fine arrangement of the light and shade, and a sweetness of colour

that combine to produce a result which is fascinating in the highest degree. This colour is at times of an exquisite peach-bloom in the flesh painting, or of an iridescence as that of an opal; a pearliness or, as a writer has expressed it, an effect like that of a "large plaque of tarnished silver." These silvery greys and pearl-like tints make his colour one of the chief glories of his art, and it was, no doubt, one of the principal causes of his great popularity as a portrait painter in his own day.

Reynolds, during Gainsborough's lifetime, showed his appreciation for the latter's art on more than one occasion. "Confound the fellow, how does he get his effects!" he is said to have exclaimed at an Academy private view, thus displaying a reluctant admiration which was equalled by Gainsborough's counter-criticism of "Damn him, how various he is!" After his rival's death, in the address which he delivered to the Academy students, the President did his best to express his appreciation of Gainsborough's artistic qualities, and to point out what seemed to him the chief merits of his painting. A few of his sentences

may be quoted here, although it is not quite fair to separate them from their context:—

"The peculiarity of his manner, or style, or we may call it—the language in which he expressed his ideas, has been considered by many as his greatest defect. But without altogether wishing to enter into the discussion—whether this peculiarity was a defect or not, intermixed as it was with great beauties, of some of which it was probably the cause, it becomes a proper subject of criticism and enquiry to a painter. A novelty and peculiarity of manner, as it is often the cause of our approbation, so likewise it is also a ground of censure; as being contrary to the practice of other painters, in whose manner we have been initiated, and in whose favour we have perhaps been prepossessed from our infancy; for, fond as we are of novelty, we are upon the whole creatures of habit. However, it is certain, that all those odd scratches and marks, which, on a close examination, are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures, and which even to experienced painters appear rather the effect of accident than design: this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance,

JOHN TAYLOR, OF BIRMINGHAM

(*By permission of George W. Taylor, Esq.*)

by a kind of magic, at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places, so that we can hardly refuse acknowledging the full effect of diligence, under the appearance of chance and hasty negligence. That Gainsborough himself considered this peculiarity in his manner, and the power it possesses of exciting surprise, as a beauty in his works, I think may be inferred from the eager desire which we know he always expressed, that his pictures, at the exhibition, should be seen near, as well as at a distance.

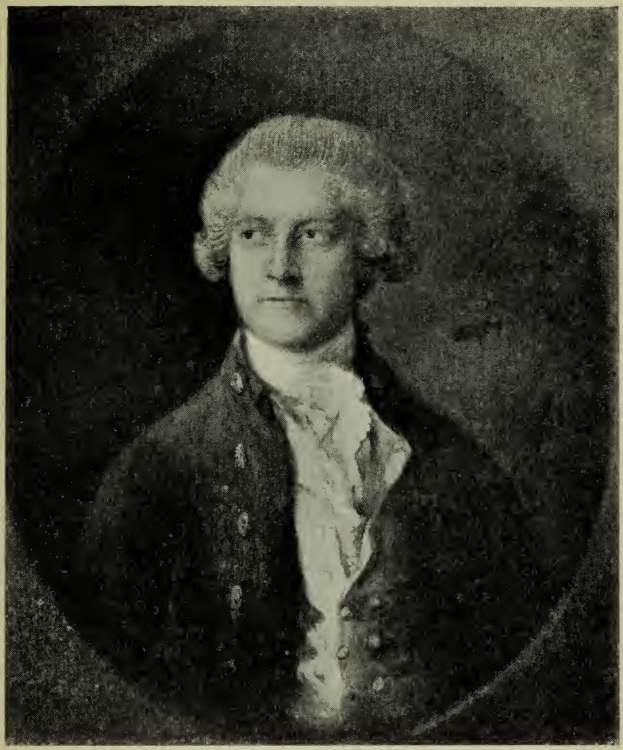
"The slightness which we see in his best works cannot always be imputed to negligence. However they may appear to superficial observers, painters know very well that a steady attention to the general effect takes up more time, and is much more laborious to the mind, than any mode of high finishing, or smoothness, without such attention.

"It must be allowed that this hatching manner of Gainsborough did very much contribute to the lightness of effect which is so eminent a beauty in his pictures; as, on the contrary, much smoothness, and uniting the

colours, is apt to produce heaviness. Every artist must have remarked how often that lightness of hand which was in his dead colour, or first painting, escaped in the finishing when he had determined the parts with more precision: and another loss he often experiences, which is of greater consequence; whilst he is employed in the detail, the effect of the whole together is either forgotten or neglected. The likeness of a portrait, as I have formerly observed, consists more in preserving the general effect of the countenance than in the most minute finishing of the features, or any of the particular parts. Now Gainsborough's portraits were often little more, in regard to finishing, or determining the form of the features, than what generally attends a dead colour; but as he was always attentive to the general effect, or whole together, I have often imagined that this unfinished manner contributed even to that striking resemblance for which his portraits were remarkable."

These "odd scratches and marks," the "pencilling" produced by hatching strokes with his brushes, to which Sir Joshua seems to give only a qualified approval, are not nearly

so prominent as some writers would lead us to expect. Seen at their proper distance from the canvas, they lose themselves in the general effect of the portrait, and help to give it that appearance of airy lightness of touch which, with the beauty of the colour and the sympathetic insight into character, form the three most fascinating charms of Gainsborough's art. On the other hand, many of his finest pictures are painted with a firmness and decision, and a clearness of handling, together with a thorough fusion of the flesh painting, which give them almost the appearance of delicately tinted enamel. Such portraits can in no sense be called "sketchy"; the solidity and the care used in the painting are too marked. The *Mrs Siddons* is a fine late example of this; and there are plenty of others bearing similar characteristics, which were produced during the earlier half of his Bath period, when his art had more affinity with the general English portrait painting of his day, and was both firmer and more "finished," with less searching after Van Dyck's delicate touch and silvery freshness of colouring, and but little of that verve in handling which marked Rubens and



LEWIS BAGOT

(By permission of H. R. R. Bagot, Esq.)

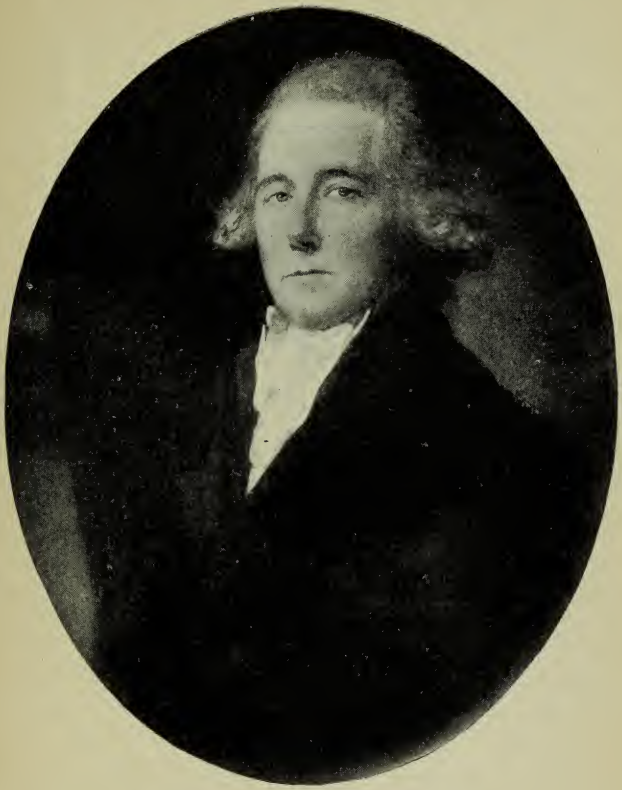
his school. His brush gradually grew more free and more rapid, until on occasion he would paint with a *bravura* which since his day has been hardly equalled; while his search after the subtleties of colour in those cool evanescent tones in which his Flemish master was so accomplished—tones which are in striking opposition to the warmer, richer and more golden colours which Reynolds borrowed from the Venetians—grew more eager every day. The ease with which he eventually gained his effects—features of his later portraiture which make so strong an appeal to so many,—are in striking contrast to his early Ipswich work, in which not only the faces of his sitters but also the costumes and accessories are painted with a patient care and a careful modelling and drawing, very unlike the thin and loose touch which is to be noticed in some of the least satisfactory of his London portraits.

The beauty of his colour and the charm of his manipulation, however, are not his only claims to greatness. He had real insight into character, and great felicity in delineating it. When some particular trait in the face of a sitter fired his artistic sense, he set it down

upon his canvas once for all without halting or fumbling. There was no hesitation—no painting and repainting as was sometimes the method of Reynolds in his search after perfection. Gainsborough saw what he wanted to express vividly and on the instant, and he translated it into paint with almost equal rapidity. Several of his portraits appear to have been painted in one sitting, or in two at the utmost. The one of *Gainsborough Dupont* (see page 101), which shows great strength and firmness, and certainty of crisp, confident touch, is said to have been accomplished in a couple of hours. The unfinished portrait of the *Duchess of Cumberland* (see page 107), at Windsor Castle, in which the head only approaches completion, is of the greatest interest as showing his methods of work. The face is almost if not quite finished, and is lovely in the pearly hues of its carnations. It has every appearance of having been painted with absolute directness, without hesitation or pause. The touch is light and feathery, while the rest of the figure, and the dress, are merely indicated with brush work which, however hasty, yet bears the stamp of a master hand.

Some of his contemporaries seem to have considered that he was a better painter of men than of women. The writer in "The Gentleman's Magazine," already referred to more than once, was of this opinion. "Since his return from Bath," he says, "as well as before, the portraits of his gentlemen have been very superior to those of his ladies, which being frequently designed from women that were painted, gave a general appearance to all his females of painted women. But in his portraits of men, imitation assumes the energy of life."

This criticism shows scant appreciation of his wonderful skill in the delineation of female loveliness. No matter from what rank of society his sitter may have sprung, her beauty appealed to him irresistibly, and he captured it and set it upon his canvas with an ease, and sometimes an abandon, which seldom erred. It was not merely the outward beauty, however, that he was content to paint, for he saw at the same time the character behind the face-mask, sometimes simple, sometimes trivial, and sometimes worthless, and noted the difference in each case, and to each gave a separate and distinct individuality with that sympathetic insight



THE REV. SIR HENRY BATE DUDLEY, Bart., about 1782
(National Gallery)

which is one of the distinguishing marks of a great painter. In such a portrait as that of *Lady Ligonier*, or of *Mrs Graham* (see page 111) in the National Gallery of Scotland, he has caught to perfection the look of aristocratic arrogance on the faces of these haughty beauties. The latter picture, with its fine expression, and the brilliant painting of its draperies, has had a curious history. After the lady's death, the picture was walled up by her disconsolate husband, and was only re-discovered many years afterwards during some alterations to the room, happily with all its beauty unimpaired. The canvas on which he has depicted the *Hon. Anne Duncombe* (see page 117), with an animation, distinction of pose, and brilliancy of execution in the draperies and background, is another example of his fondness for blue. The dress in this splendid picture is bluer even than Master Buttall's. What could be more lovely than the portrait of *Mrs Sheridan* (see page 121), belonging to Lord Rothschild? She is seated on a bank under some trees, her sweet face, so full of expression with its pensive smile, encircled by her dark curls. That air of subdued and tender melancholy, which is a note of so

many of the artist's portraits, is here rendered with a brush that has flowed with harmonious lines and delightful colour. Its pearl-like tints of grey, pale purple, and rose, have been exquisitely blended into one perfect whole. The painting of the diaphanous draperies is equally felicitous, while the background is in his happiest manner. The earlier portrait of this lady, whose life must have been far from a happy one, also painted out of doors, together with her sister, Mrs Richard Tickell (see page 125), when they were the Misses Linley, and now in the Dulwich Gallery, though not so fine as Lord Rothschild's picture, is still a work of great beauty. The two "fair maids of Bath" are represented with a simplicity and unaffectedness of pose and sweetness of expression which are very charming. This portrait group, which was painted in Bath, seems to have suffered some deterioration, and to have been returned to the artist to be touched up, for Mrs Tickell, writing to Mrs Sheridan, November 1st, 1785, says:—"When I came home last night I found *our* picture come home from Gainsbro's very much improved and freshened up. My father and mother are

quite in raptures with it; indeed, it is in *my* opinion the *best* and *handsomest* of *you* that I have ever seen."

In such portraits as those of *Mrs Beaufoy*, *Mrs Mears* and *Mrs Lowndes-Stone* (see pages 131, 135, 139), there is a lightness of touch, an airy grace, combined with a melodious scheme of colour, which make them wonderfully brilliant and sympathetic studies of a happy, beautiful womanhood. The *Lady Sheffield* (see page 143), in her large hat and "tempestuous petticoat," has been painted with the utmost verve, and is an example of Gainsborough in his most florid manner. The brush seems to have flung the draperies upon the canvas, in sheer delight in its own rapidity and brilliancy. Her dress is of a colder blue than the Blue Boy's, with silvery grey above it, and in grace of conception and harmony of colour, few portraits have surpassed it.

In his likenesses of frailer beauties he is just as distinctive in the subtle rendering of their wayward character, and in the appreciation of that loveliness which helped in their undoing. *Grace Dalrymple*, afterwards Mrs Elliot, whose personal charms were as numerous as her

SIR CHARLES HOLTE, of Aston Hall
(City of Birmingham Art Gallery)

lovers, and who, after a life of exceptionally notorious irregularity, became virtuous in her old age, and ended with a book of edifying memoirs, was painted by him more than once. The half-length of her belonging to the Duke of Portland (see page 147), is painted with wonderful expression in the dark eyes under still darker eyebrows, in strong contrast to her elaborately dressed and powdered hair. The white dress, cut low at the neck, with its edging of lace, is painted in his most hasty and impressionistic manner, but is none the less effective in its suggestion of filmy material, which no one knew better how to indicate than Gainsborough, with a few apparently careless brushmarks, which yet fall into their proper place and become coherent when seen from the proper distance. As a study of frail beauty it is one of the finest things he accomplished. It is surpassed, however, by the splendid full-length of *Mrs Robinson* ("Perdita"), in the Wallace Collection (see page 151). In this, his beautiful, feathery touch is seen to perfection. Her lovely expressive face, with the sadness in her eyes, caused no doubt by her knowledge of the fleeting nature of the affection of her Prince

"Florizel," whose miniature she holds in her hand, is rendered with a mastery and a sympathy which place this portrait, which was painted in 1782, among the world's masterpieces. This lady, both refined and accomplished, was, perhaps, more unfortunate than sinful; and the contrast between her character, and the more ignoble one of Grace Dalrymple, has been admirably seized by the artist. The landscape background, of the true Gainsborough convention, graceful and hasty in its suggestion of tree forms, is very like the one in the *Mrs Sheridan*. The pose of the two figures is also very similar. The Pomeranian dog is one of the best instances of Gainsborough's excellence in animal painting.

Other examples of his portraiture of women are illustrated here, but no detailed description can be given of them. The one of *Lady Mulgrave* (page 155), now in America, shows him at the acme of his most exuberant manner, when colour and handling, combined with the beauty of his subject, made up an indescribable whole, which, in the particular effect aimed at by the painter, has rarely been equalled. The portrait of *Lady Mendip*, in the Earl of Normanton's collection (page 159), like the

Lady Mulgrave chiefly a study in tones of black and white, proves that beauty of a maturer age could also appeal to him, and fire him with artistic zeal. This middle-aged lady, with her double chin and determined look, still full of life and vigour, is depicted with rare expression. In somewhat striking contrast to *Lady Mendip* we get the more quietly painted portrait of *Queen Charlotte* (see page 163), in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in whom the artist has discovered an elegance which her contemporaries would not allow. This, however, was probably not mere flattery of a royal personage. He saw a beauty in her homely, motherly character, which he mirrored in her face, and by softening the harshness of her very German expression he has made the dullest of women look her sweetest. In his portraits of children he was particularly successful. What could be more charming than the full length of bright-eyed little *Miss Haverfield*, in the Wallace Collection (see page 167), with her white frock, and black cloak, and her large hat over the close-fitting white cap tied under her chin? Reynolds never painted a more beautiful study of

ALEXANDER, 10TH DUKE OF HAMILTON, 1782

(*By permission of Miss de Rothschild*)

childhood. Earlier examples of his happy renderings of children are the portraits of little *Lady Charlotte Finch,* winding thread on a shuttle, belonging to the Earl of Aylesford, and of *Miss Gardiner.*

That air of aristocratic distinction with which Van Dyck stamped his delineations of English men and women, is also strongly marked in Gainsborough, who perhaps owed some of it to his close study of the Flemish master, although like the latter, he found much of it in the bearing of his sitters themselves. In less distinguished circles, however—among the well-to-do citizen classes, for instance—he was equally at home. The portraits of *Mr and Mrs John Taylor* (see pages 171 and 175), are examples of this. These canvases, which have never been subjected to the smoke and dirt of a great city, are still in faultless condition, and as fresh as when they first left the artist's studio. The lady's portrait has all that unnameable grace which attracted so many people to his painting-room, and has always been one of the chief causes of the admiration given to his work; while the man is painted with the utmost vigour and directness, and is a

strong and virile piece of work such as always characterises the best of Gainsborough's portraits of men. This worthy citizen, whose father was the founder of Lloyds Bank, was one of the most notable men of Birmingham in his day, and singularly successful in all his numerous business undertakings. These two portraits, which were exhibited for some years in the Birmingham Art Gallery, are excellent examples of the durability of Gainsborough's pictures when compared with those of Sir Joshua. This was undoubtedly owing to his rapid, unhesitating method of painting, which though apparently slight, has stood the test of time much more admirably than the constant repainting and the experimental exercises with dangerous colours which marked his rival's work. In most cases where Gainsborough's pictures have been kept in the country, they have, with occasional slight fading, retained the tones of their first painting; and it is only when they have remained in London for many years, that they have lost much of their original silvery quality and have become rather hot and "horny."

Somewhat similar to the portrait of *Mr*

John Taylor is the fine one of *Mr Lewis Bagot*, afterwards Bishop of St Asaph (see page 179). This picture, too, retains almost all its original freshness, and has been untouched by the clumsy hand of any "restorer." It displays fine insight into a lovable, affectionate disposition, such as this amiable prelate is reported to have possessed, and is painted with a refinement in keeping with his character. The artist's "feathery" touch is here almost lighter than usual, in the delicacy with which the features and hair are modelled, though the lace scarf round the neck is indicated with the usual hasty effectiveness. This picture has only once been publicly exhibited, at the loan collection of portraits in the Birmingham Art Gallery in 1900. The portrait of the *Rev. Sir Henry Bate Dudley* (see page 183), in the National Gallery, a type of the fighting parson and man-about-town in holy orders, is a study of a Churchman whose character had little in common with that of Lewis Bagot. The face has that opalescent fusion of surface, soft in tone and delicate in its greys, which is constantly to be noticed in Gainsborough's portraits. His own likeness (see frontispiece),

LORD ARCHIBALD HAMILTON, 1782

(By permission of Miss ae Rothschild)

belonging to the Royal Academy, is in the front rank of his achievements, and is in quality equal to his favourite master Van Dyck.

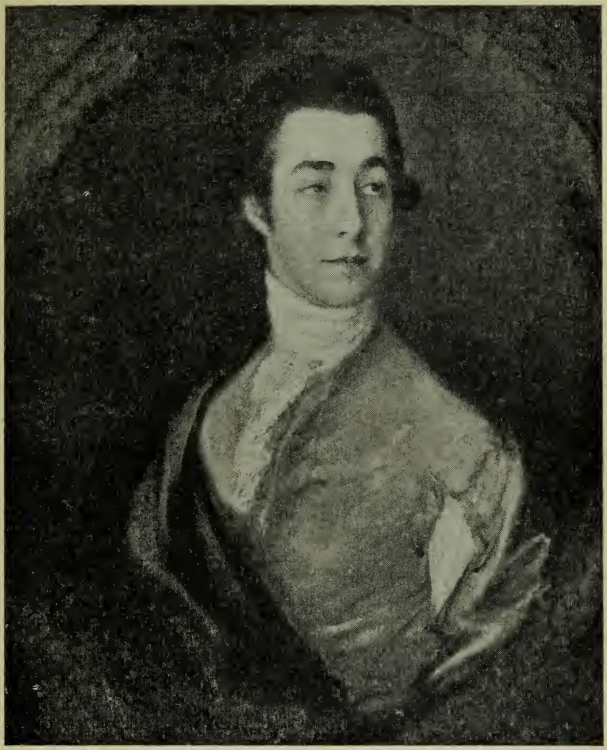
Gainsborough was obliged to spend much of his time in painting fashionable dandies and handsome boys, but he could be masculine enough when he met a man, as can be seen in such portraits as those of *George Coyte* or *Admiral Hawkins.* The portrait of *Sheridan* and that of *Sir William Blackstone,* both until recently in the Peel Collection, are notable examples of his reading of widely differing characters. His portraits of actors and musicians have been already mentioned; with these he was almost always felicitous in the extreme. The *Colonel St Leger* (see page 39), prince of dandies, is a representative example of this particular class of Gainsborough's portraiture. He loved to represent his boys in all the gallant bravery of the costume of Van Dyck. The most famous examples of this are, of course, *The Blue Boy,* and *The Pink Boy.* Several of his young sitters appear in silks of the former colour. The two Hamilton portraits (see pages 191 and 195), painted in 1782, belonging to Miss de Rothschild, are very delightful renderings

in this manner, more particularly the one of *Alexander, the tenth Duke.* Two earlier examples, done in 1773, just before leaving Bath, of the *Hon. William Henry Bouverie* and the *Hon. Edward Bouverie* (see pages 199 and 203), in the Earl of Radnor's collection, are of great beauty, painted with all Gainsborough's refinement, combined with brilliancy of execution. The elder brother, with strongly marked superciliousness in his features, is dressed in yellow; the younger boy, who has a face of very sweet expression, is all in blue, which in its cool shimmer and the play of light in its folds, equals the more famous *Master Buttall.* Mr Claude Phillips well says that "the sense of perfect ease and directness of execution, almost of improvisation, is indeed conveyed in these masterly studies with irresistible force."

Many critics have united in agreeing that Gainsborough's masterpiece of portraiture is the picture sometimes known as *The Morning Walk,* the portraits of Squire William Hallett and his wife, belonging to Lord Rothschild (see page 207). It is hard to make a final selection, but in this lovely work the painter certainly reaches his point of highest accom-

plishment. As a piece of dexterous painting it is superb. The grouping is natural, and the two figures full of youthful grace and beauty. The lady's grey dress is finely rendered and most harmonious in colour. Her husband, a well-known sportsman of his day, is in black velvet, with white silk stockings. In the painting of this young couple, just home from their honeymoon, he has once again displayed the keenest sympathy, and it illustrates his point of view, and the methods, peculiarly his own, by which he achieved it, perhaps more completely than any other of his works. A painter who could accomplish such a piece of artistry as this must always be ranked among the masters.

In the painting of groups of two or more persons, Gainsborough was not always successful in obtaining that unity of conception which is necessary before a picture of such a nature can be regarded as perfect. In this, however, he fails in good company, as many of the greatest painters have not been always successful in linking together the component parts of their more ambitious portrait-groups, so as to form one intimate whole. They did



THE HON. WILLIAM HENRY BOUVERIE, 1773

(By permission of the Earl of Radnor)

Photograph kindly lent by Messrs H. Virtue & Co.

it at times, of course. One of the most happy examples, to speak of English eighteenth century art alone, was accomplished by Romney in his magnificent group of children dancing in a ring—*The Stafford Family,* in which picture he rose to real greatness. It is not only a splendid piece of portraiture, but noble and artistic in composition, and all the figures are bound together in that unison which is so necessary and so rare if such grouping is to be entirely successful; in this instance, Romney has combined great truthfulness and felicity in rendering form and movement with noble traditions of composition, which give the picture an accent of distinction among much which was distinguished in contemporary art.

In such a picture as the *Baillie Family,* in the National Gallery, excellent as each individual portrait in this family group may be, Gainsborough has not entirely succeeded in finding a motive which should bind them together in complete homogeneity. Other pictures of his will be recalled, where two or three figures are combined, which, in spite of their beauty of execution and exquisite tonality in the scheme of delicate colour, are yet a

little stiff and awkward in composition. Such perfect unity as is to be found in *The Morning Walk* is rare with him. He saw each separate figure of a group with his usual keen perception, but unless happy chance threw them together so as to form a natural and artistic composition, he was unable to arrive at a perfectly satisfactory result by any mental process or by his own unaided efforts. It is on this account that such a beautiful picture as the *Marsham Family* (see page 211), representing the young Earl of Romney and his three sisters in a wood, in Lord Rothschild's collection, just fails to reach the highest level of his art. It has, however, more unity than some of his groupings, though it resolves itself into three separate parts, the young Earl gathering the nuts, the delightful central group of the two elder girls, one of whom receives the fruit in her apron, and the little sister seated on the left, with the two dogs. In all other respects it is a picture of exceptional charm, and shows him at his best in those happy delineations of childhood in which he was at times unsurpassed.

In the large oval of the *Duke and Duchess of*

Cumberland, walking arm in arm in Kew or Kensington Gardens, with Lady Elizabeth Luttrell seated on a bank on the right, which belongs to His Majesty, the figures, which are not life-size, are rather awkwardly placed, and a little overpowered by the fine landscape. In such a picture as *The Mall*, however, which is crowded with much smaller figures, the grouping and arrangement are excellent in every way, and both the figures and their environment are fused together so completely and harmoniously that the composition stands out as one of the most delightful that has ever been accomplished in England, full of vivacity and sparkle, and displaying that almost incredible lightness of touch which Sir Joshua could not help admiring, though it did not quite fit in with his own theories as to what should constitute the practice of a great artist.

Gainsborough's contemporaries seem to have been unanimous in their opinion as to his great power of giving a good if not a striking, likeness of his sitters. The remarks of Reynolds on this point in his fourteenth Discourse have already been quoted. His methods of painting a portrait, as described by Smith, may to some

THE HON. EDWARD BOUVERIE, 1773

(By permission of the Earl of Radnor)

Photograph kindly lent by Messrs H. Virtue & Co.

extent account for this power of giving a living presentment. "I was much surprised," he says, "to see him sometimes paint portraits with pencils on sticks full six feet in length, and his method of using them was this: he placed himself and his canvas at a right angle with the sitter, so that he stood still, and touched the features of his picture exactly at the same distance at which he viewed his sitter." In addition to this he shut out most of the light in the room, allowing it to fall from a single small opening full upon the face he was painting.

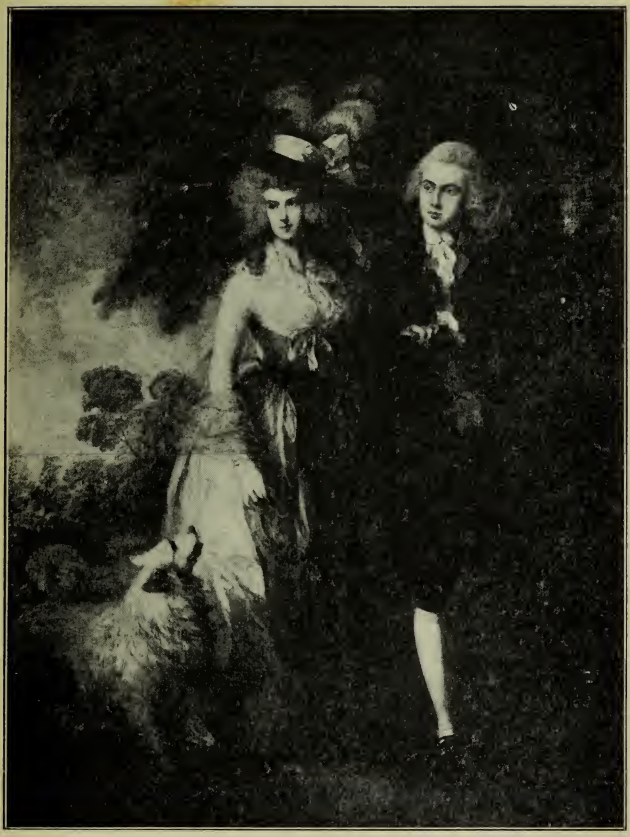
The rapidity of his execution and a certain freedom in handling, were apparent even in his Ipswich days, when his pictures, in comparison with his later works, were carefully and even highly finished. Some unfavourable criticisms as to his manipulation in the early portrait of Mr Robert Edgar, the Colchester attorney, must been been passed by that gentleman or his friends, for in a letter to him, dated 1758, Gainsborough writes:—"You please me much by saying that no other fault is to be found in your picture than the roughness of the surface, for that part being of use in

giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by; in short, being the touch of the pencil, which is harder to preserve than smoothness, I am much better pleased that they should spy out things of that kind, than to see an eye half an inch out of its place, or a nose out of drawing when viewed at a proper distance."

In the letter from Paul Whitehead, already quoted, we see that in Bath, in 1758, his style was considered to be coarse and slight, but possessing ease and spirit, and his execution extremely rapid. Lord Villiers only gave him two sittings, in which time the artist produced an exact likeness, "as it is he himself," though rough enough in the handling to serve as an inn-sign. It will be gathered from such indications that his style was not entirely a result of his study of Van Dyck and Rubens, but was to a large extent his own, developed unconsciously during years of practice, and only quickened suddenly into intenser and freer life when he had gained full acquaintance with the methods of the two great Flemings. His own portrait as a young man,

belonging to Mr Fairfax Murray (see page 23), displays a freedom of touch in striking contrast to the more timid and carefully finished likenesses he was at the same time producing of his Suffolk neighbours, and shows that the peculiar qualities of his genius were more largely inborn than the result of external example.

Putting aside a number of hasty and indifferent performances, for which the continual demands of the fashionable world upon his time and talent must be largely blamed, and keeping in view only his masterpieces, of which he painted many, he may be placed with confidence among the few great artists not only of the English, but of every other school of painting. In him the artistic temperament was personified. He will always remain the painter's painter. His superb mastery over his brush, the lightness of his feathery touch, which, with all its appearance of careless ease and hastiness, was yet as true and as right as though he had laboured and repeated every stroke in the earnest search after perfection, must always appeal to those who interest themselves in the more technical side of painting. His power of "putting it on"



SQUIRE HALLETT AND HIS WIFE
"The Morning Walk"
(*By permission of Lord Rothschild*)

was unrivalled, and when he failed it was not from want of power to overcome the difficulty, but from want of interest in the particular portrait upon which he was engaged at the moment. Any picturesque or attractive quality in his sitters made an irresistible appeal to him, and his brain conceived the resulting picture almost without volition on his part. To some this result may appear thin and sketchy, but it is nearly always exact, and, when looked at from the proper distance, each touch, each graceful curve of the brush, takes its right place in the composition, and helps to form a whole imbued with beauty and with truth. It is remarkable, when it is remembered that many hundreds of studies and sketches by him are still in existence, how few of them are preliminary studies for any of his finished portraits. The number of these which can be said at all definitely to be the first idea for some well-known picture is extremely limited, and in nearly every instance shows that they were carried out in paint with very little alteration in the design. He had, in fact, seen the picture he wished to paint with a spontaneous vividness which

made any preliminary attempt on paper unnecessary, except on a few occasions when the importance of the subject may have caused him to take unusual pains, or where an imperfect sympathy between painter and patron entailed some little searching after inspiration.

Of the beauty of his colour schemes it is difficult to speak without exaggeration. In his finest pictures the colour is so lovely and so harmonious that it affects the senses like listening to beautiful music. He delighted in grey, in silver, and particularly in blue, and in cool colours in his shadows and flesh painting. In other pictures his tones are more sunny, and the flesh tints are warmed by a golden glow of colour which shows through from beneath them. In days when powder, paint, and patches were fashionable, and a fair complexion a social necessity, the bloom of the peach, already mentioned more than once, with which he suffused the cheeks of his lovely ladies, is said to have been one of the chief causes of his popularity with the beauties and dandies who occupied so much of his time.

Gainsborough seldom relied upon the services of the drapery-painter. This was only natural

in an artist who conceived his picture as a complete composition, in which figure and dress, and certainly grace and animation of pose, and appropriateness of background, were almost, if not quite, as important to him as the face. He placed his figures in natural and graceful attitudes, and very few of them have the appearance of mere posing for a portrait. In the management of his draperies he was constantly very happy. In the most florid and hastily handled of these there is a broad realisation of texture and material, a flow of line, and an evident delight in the pure colour of the silks and satins, which unite to produce an effect of great brilliance. He painted such things at times with fine abandon and sense of movement. On the other hand, in some of his pictures the accessories, particularly objects such as musical instruments, are painted with the truth and finish which are characteristic of a good painter of genre.

His portraits seem living, breathing men and women, who have paused for a moment that the painter may set them with a flash of inspiration on his canvas. An intense vitality marks his work at its best — a vitality

THE EARL OF ROMNEY AND HIS SISTERS
"The Marsham Family"
(*By permission of Lord Rothschild*)

made still more real by the revelation of character which the magic pencil of the artist makes clear to us through the eyes, the mobile lips, and every fleeting expression on the face of his sitter. He does not attempt to reveal this character by unduly emphasising any dominant feature or idiosyncrasy, nor by the aid of surroundings which may suggest the calling or career, or some leading event in the life of the subject. He prefers, as Mr. Claude Phillips puts it, "to render the pulsating life, the suggestion in repose of impending movement. He prefers to give the physical and mental individuality welded into one, asserting itself in a simple conception of no imported dramatic significance." When there is added to this vitality an exquisiteness of colour, a harmony of tone, and a technical execution that has seldom been surpassed, we get as a result a great master of painting; and such a master of the brush Thomas Gainsborough was without doubt.

NOTE

Two very interesting portraits by Gainsborough have been brought to light recently in Stuttgart, reproductions of which are given here through the courtesy of Professor Konrad Lange, who occupies the Chair of Art in the University of Tübingen. Professor Lange has been engaged in putting in order the neglected Stuttgart Gallery, and has succeeded in rescuing from oblivion a number of valuable pictures, both from the old stores of the Gallery and from various palaces and country houses belonging to the royal family of Wurtemburg. In the Castle of Ludwigsburg, in the bedchamber of Queen Matilda, now untenanted, he discovered two of Gainsborough's masterpieces, which had been hanging there, unnoticed, for nearly a century.

In 1797, Carlotte Augusta, Princess Royal of England, married Frederic, last of the sovereign

Dukes and first King of Wurtemburg. Queen Matilda, as she was called by her new subjects, took with her to her Swabian home the portraits of her mother, Queen Charlotte, and her little brother Prince Octavius, who was born on February 23rd, 1779, and died when only four years' old on May 3rd, 1783. She herself died in 1828, and from that time until to-day, when Professor Lange recognised that they were by a master-hand, the two pictures were completely forgotten.

The portrait of Queen Charlotte is a full-length the size of life. She stands erect, facing the spectator, in a white satin dress with a black lace scarf round her shoulders, which she holds in place with both hands. Her arms and neck are bare, and she is wearing at her breast a large miniature of George III., beautifully painted. The background consists of a curtain on the right, and on the left an open portico with a landscape and part of a classical building seen through it. Judging from the photograph, it has been painted with all Gainsborough's characteristic ease and brilliance. The pose is a very natural one, and the expression of the face rendered

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

(Stuttgart Gallery)

with that sympathy which always marked his portraits of the Queen.

There are a number of full-length portraits of Queen Charlotte in England, notably one in the collection of the Earl of Powis. Others are in the Abingdon Town Hall, at Penshurst, the Horse Guards, and elsewhere. No doubt in the painting of some of these Gainsborough Dupont took a large share. The Stuttgart picture, with the exception of slight differences in the background, bears a very close resemblance to Lord Powis's version, and is possibly a repetition of it by the artist himself. It is no doubt earlier in date than the fine full-length of the Queen in Buckingham Palace, which was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1781, in which she wears a gold-coloured dress. The two pictures are alike in the position of the body, the pose of the head, and the architectural background, but there the similarity ends. In the latter work her hair is dressed very high, with a chaplet of flowers entwined in it, while she holds a fan in her right hand, and has a spaniel beside her.

The portrait of Prince Octavius was probably painted in 1783, as he appears to be quite four

PRINCE OCTAVIUS

(*Stuttgart Gallery*)

years old. He is seen in profile, his fair curls falling upon his shoulders. It has been painted in Gainsborough's swiftest, hastiest manner, but the canvas is full of life and beauty.

Mr Charles Loeser, who has seen the original, says of it:—"The artist's wonderful feeling for the child's play of feature precludes all thought of the picture having been painted after the death of his winsome model. With a touch so light and seemingly swift as to leave scarce a veil of pigment on the canvas, the master has given an illusion of entire life-like plasticity. In their fair scheme his colours sparkle with a gaiety of true enfolding sunlight, and lend an extraordinary delicacy to the flush of cheek and lips, to the clear blue eye, and to the fabrics of the child's gay costume."

There are two portraits of this little Prince at Windsor, each a bust in an oval. Both are full face, and one of them was engraved in stipple by T. Cheesman in 1806. In all details of costume, and the arrangement of the hair, it resembles the Stuttgart version. The latter, as far as can be seen from a large photograph, seems to be a genuine work of the master. The head is very similar to the one, also in pro-

file, in Benjamin West's picture, engraved in line by Robert Strange, which represents Prince Octavius and his brother Alfred, who died in 1782 at the age of two, ascending to heaven in the arms of an angel. The Windsor example now hanging in the Queen's audience-chamber, and one of the series of heads of the royal family in ovals, exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1783, is considered by Mr Lionel Cust to be the only undoubted original by Gainsborough. Fulcher's story of the king finding, on the morning after the death of one of his children, Gainsborough at work on a portrait of the little one, refers to Prince Alfred.

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